^ SKETCH MAP SHOWING' THE-CITIES, RAILWAYS, AND RIVERS

REFERRED TO IN TOE COURSE OF THE STORY '

A LEAF IN THE STORM

A Novel oj War-Swept China

LIN YUTANG

WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD

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CHAPTER I

PoTA LEFT the Prince’s Garden, which was in the north-eastern part of the city, and sauntered in long, leisurely steps, pipe in mouth and hands in trouser pockets, on his way to see his friend Lao Peng for supper, as was his custom. As this was a comparatively deserted district, he had to pass through several formless patches of ^^cant ground.

It had been a perfect day, like all October days in Peiping, sunny and crisp, and the evening air was pleasantly sharp and

stringent, just as it had been before the war came. The autumn sun had bleached the fine dust to a dry grey, and now at dusk, the slate-blue walls and tiled roofr of houses blended with the bare ground in a soft, hazy twilight scene, with the blurred outlines of objects enveloped in the quickly darkening distance. The few street lights were not yet lit, and above &e deathlike silence, broken only by a few crows cawing in the neighbouring trees, could be heard, if one listened carefully, the faint, ^tant overtone, hushed and harmonious, of a city retiring for sleep.

Poya walked in that twilight for a quarter of a mile, meeting only two or three poor people returning home, silent as himself, their heads bent, carrying in their Imds oil pots and little packages for supper wrapped in lotus leaves. A weary-looking policeman in black uniform, standing at a comer, spoke to him frmiliarly. The silence was frightening. Neverthdess he felt, as he always did, pleasure in a walk at this time of the day, when the air was keen and cool, and the mystery of city life deepened around him.

Only upon coming into Nansiaochieh did he see signs of life, with street lights shi^g in long rows, and the oil lamps of small eating places for poor people glittedng in the general darkness. It was a long, narrow, and unpaved lane, barely ten to twelve feet wide, running north and sou&, parallel to Hatamen Street. Lao Peng’s house was near this alley, a little distance south of the East-Four Failou, just before reaching the streets of larger residences further south, now mainly occupied by Japanese. Here

and there were a few tramping rickshaws, and others parked on the roadside without light, for the pullers would light their small oil lamps only after they had been engaged for a ride, in order to save oil. ;

He turned left to teach Lao Peng’s house, which was situated in an alley so small that a rickshaw could barely go through. In that darkness, he almost stumbled upon a doorstep before he realised that he had arrived.

He gave a few knocks on the iron tings of the closed gate and soon heard within the coughing of a man approachmg, whom he knew to be the old servant of Lao Peng.

“Who is it?” the rnan c^ed.

“It’s me.”

“Is it Yao shat^eM’*

“Yes.”

The door latch was slowly drawn, to. the accompaniment of a

violent fit of coughing.

“Is laoyeb in?” asked Poya.

“He left this morning and has not returned yet. Come in. It is cold these autumn evenings. He will be back for supper.”

Poya walked across the yard into the parbur. It was a charac-terisdcally bare room, with the simplest of furniture, a cheap varnished square wooden table, a few cane chairs covered with hard cushions of dark-blue cloth, and a rickety old armchair that must have cost only ten dollars second-hand at Tungan Baaaar. iEvery time Poya sat m it, the sprbgs aeaked and sagged on one side. The cloth cover had holes burned by cigarettes, and he could fisel the steel coils moving every time he shifted his position. It was on this that Lao Peng sat when he wanted to relax. A few open bookcases, trade of “tear-stain bamboo,” stacked foil of books ^ magasanCs and gramophone records in the most disordrSrly feshion, fined part of the northern wall. The books B ^ assortment, ranging ficom poultry and bee culture to

B^dtom. Poya had once noticed an old well-thumbed volume of foe Budte smpture, the Sstrangam, and knew Lao Peng was a a ^ Buddhist but diriously they had never discussed Buddhism. A gramophone console, in bright-red varnish, stood m ^mer, strangdy out of harmony with foe rest of the fornitute.

The wwden table was laid with bowls and chopsticks for two,

with small teacups and a pewter wine jar and small three-inch

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dishes containing pickles and ginger, but the food was not yet on the table. Poya knew that he was expected for diofiftfj for at this table many a night- Poya had drunk out of these teacups with his hiend and had discussed the war and politics until both had had enough wine and sat opposite each other and wept. Then they stopped talking and went on drinking silently. The more they drank, the more profusely their tears came, and then they would stare at each other without a word for half an hour at a luxuriously wiping their eyes and heariag one another breathe. It was said that weeping and the sheddmg of tears under the influence of wine was ^ood for a man in sorrow, and they both had enjoyed it, needed it, especially during that first week when the Twenty-ninth Army had retreated and abandoned the people of Peiping to its captors. The ancients had a name for this sort of drinking; they called it elfotefin^ “drinking in sorrow,” but Poya and Lao Peng had added the word Aw, and called it “drinking focing sorrow.” The next day, one of them would say to the other, “Didn’t we facing-sorrow-drink very well last night? You were the sorrow, and when I looked at your face, I just couldn’t stop the tears. I felt much better and had a perfixt sleep.” The habit had lately been discontinued, but they still always had a little sip when they supped together.

The old servant came’in with a pot of hot tea, pouted a cup, and said, “It will not be long now before laoyeb returns.”

Poya sat down in the creaky armchair, picking up the news-paper which lay on it, intending to read. But soon he let the sheets slip £com his hand and fall to the floor. He sat reflecting on a mystery, more important to him than the war news. Ever since he came to know Lao Peng a few years ago, the man had foscinated him. It seemed unbelievable that in this bare room lived a great man in obscurity, the only perfectly happy man that he knew, without wife and children. He had not known anyone like him before. A man who had found himself, 'Sdthout fear and without worry,” as Confucius described foe gentleman.

Peiping did not know Lao Peng. Ete had done nothing extra-ordinary. His outward life had been one fidlure after another. His over-enthusiasm had always crashed and had robbed him of half of his fortune. More than ten years ago, he conceived foe idea of growing tomatoes in Peiping. Because nobody else had thought of it, he foought it a certain money-making iclea. His reasoning

was and simple: Peiping, dien called Pej^g, had Idscious pefsimmons; tomatoes were known as “foreign persimmons”;

dierefbre Peking should grow luscious tomatoes* Pic disregarded the feet persimmons grow on trees while tomatoes grow on shrubs: Peking refused to grow tomatoes, at least on his soil, and his tomato fiitm lost him several thousand dollars. His ncia investment was in imported leghorn chickens, fed with cod-liver oil, but the eggs were too espensive to compete with local eggs, which cost only a dollar for fifty, and in summer a dollar for almost a hundred. .He had no idea of transportation and selling costs. The next air castle .was a bee colony to produce honey, another idea no one in Peking had thought of. After these unfortunate ventures, he wisely put the rest of his fortune in the banks and was in that happy state of being beyond disapj^int-ments. Poya called him Lao Peng,, or Old Peng, as intimate ficiends call each other.

Ten years ago, in his thirty-fifth year, Lao Peng’s wife died. He had tried courageously and in vain to teach her the official thirty-nine letters of the alphabet used in schools. His heroism was great; he bought school charts to hang on the wall and himself drew pictures alongside the alphabetic writing, and the wife struggled heroically with the thi^-nine letters but could not take them in. Spelling required imagination and a little abstract thirildng. After she learned the sounds of the letters, still the sotmds of the words feUed to come. The letters M-I-N (pro-iV>unced just could not become MIN, and there was

nothing to be done about it. It was pathetic to see Peng take so much trouble to teach his fet and feithful oid-feshioned wife, and

still more touching to see her con over per^pW, Ur long after

school age.

makes what?” his wife would ask.

“Mtr^e-em MEN,” he would say for the fiftieth time.

“Why?”

“J3»-«wIN . . .”

“Why?”

“Therefore mer-IN MEN.”

“Wbit is this foreign stuff? I don’t understand. I like
Confucius’ characters better. Tien is heaven, and H is earth, and
when you’ve learned it, you’ve leamed it.”

“But fer-ien spells #’««.”

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'TDon’t tty to confuse me. I’ll not learn.”

“But you must. This is education.”

“Count me as one of your failures, my good man. I never opposed your running the tomato &rm and your diicken farm. Now let me off.” Thereafter he gave up teadxing her. 'Never-theless, he said he had enjoyed those lessons wi& his illiterate ■v^e. When his wife died, he buried her properly and never thought of marrying again.

.After that he tried to improve the alphabetic writing to make it easy enough to penetrate peasant minds and again he ftiled happily.

So outwardly he had failed, and Peking did not know him. He had some friends in polidcal circles and knew some ^duates of the "^ampoa Academy and he was a personal ftiend of General Pai, being originally ftorn. Liuchow, Kwangsi, and thus a co-provincial of Ae Kwangsi General. But he had never wanted to go into politics, which was wise on his part. If it had not been for this present war, he would have died unknown, and this story probably would not have been written.

It was seven o’clock already and still Old Peng had not come. Poya’s need to talk with Old Peng was great, sometimes unbear-able. Since the fell of Peiping and the departure of his relatives to the South, Poya had had no one else to 1^ to. He usually stayed indoors during the day, feeling like a captive in his own garden

home. Only in the evening did he venture out of his house, and come to see Peng, In his friend's presence, he felt he could say ^ he wanted to say and be understood, could ask questions and receive firm answers. Their ftiendship had deqpened with Ws loneliness, and he wanted very mudi to exchange thoughts with Peng, to hear his opinions and get his advice.

Many people thought Poya a fop, a typical sbaqyeb of rich homes, surrounded and followed by amuicing young women,' and he knew he had done much to deserve that reputation. He ^ught of his meeting with Malin this afternoon. He had a fiseling mat he had been felling in love with her these last few days. He wondered what Peng would think of MEalin. Their lives were so (hffarent; he was young and taU and called handsome, brought up in all the luxury of a ferge, rich fiumly, with cultivated tastes in art and Utemture and the pleasures of living, while Old Peng was an ascetic, shabby in his appearance and careless of all material

comfotts, a celibate at forty-five, living apart from all women. And yet he discerned in his friend a great and generous soul, with a somewhat visionary mind, and a heart as tender as a child's. With all Poya’s mentd gifts and polish and savoir-vivre and worldly iitif^ftrsfanHing of women, he had a touch of mysticism, inlicritcd from his grand&ther. Old Yao. This made him akin to Peng, and

enabled him at once to understand and appreciate the different character of his friend’s genius. Old Peng had all but saved him from becoming a cynic, which would have been the logied development of a young man of his intelligence and circumstances.

Once Old Peng had gathered together four or five pupils from the neighbourhood, induding some apprentices, and had begun a free school in his own home, which brought him innumerable troubles. Again he tried to teahh the alphabetic writing, but some masters complained that their apprentices were prevented from rising early for work, and others discovered that they were not learning the regular characters of Confucius. One by one they dropped off, until only a stupid young man of twenty-tliree r ema in e d. Poya had seen him sitting nightly, plugging at his lesson, while Old Peng tried with infinite patience to bring some light into his obdurate mind. Because he was now the only pupil and asked to be taught the one thousand regular characters. Old Peng undertook the uphill task of coaching him through, which he thought would t^e six months if he had luck. The young man sat learning to write the characters, holding his brush as if it weighed a hundred catties, his forehead perspiring under the l^pUght.

“What is the use,” Poya had wked, “wasting the best part of every evening with a worthless mind that can never learn anything anyway? What good could one more such man able to read write do to society as a whole?”

'^y dm fdend, you don't see the point, but ! do,” Peng had

relied. “You don’t see what is happening to this man’s mind. It

IS a straggling mind. Why should his life be worth less to him
gan yours or mine? Can you tell me tl^e difference? He is stupid.
He IS worthless. The other night I lost my patience with him and
him If he still meant to go through to the end. He looked so
tautened and begged me not to discontinue him and I saw tears
m hisses. He said he couldn’t pay for school and this was big
only chance. ‘What is the matter?’ I asked. And then he confessed

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to me that he loved a neighbour’s daughter who would not marry
him until he had learned to read and write. Do you know what
this means to him,' what it means to his future, if through my
efiorts he can marry such a girl? You rich people sometimes spend
thousands and tens of thousands of dollars to marry a girl. Why
should this afifeir be less to him than it is to any of us? Ckn you tell
the difference? Some men are williug to commit suicide for love.”

“Do you think he would commit suicide if you discontinued
him?”

“Probably not. But it might change his future — ^the girl mi ght

not marry him.”

And so Old Peng went through the sis months with him, from winter to spring, just to enable an honest but stupid young man to marry a girl Peng had not seen. During the winter months, Lao Peng also bought and presented him with a hat, the only one he had had m all his life. On the wedding day. Old Peng put on his best gown and went to the wedding feast. He was introduced to the bride as the “teacher” and the bride thanked him and then Lao Peng discovered that she was pock-marked, although otherwise well formed. He was somewhat disillusioned, but said to himself, “What of it? A pock-marked person is usually clever. That is an ambitious girl, too.” The girl had a few himdred dollars, which was why she could choose her own husband, and after the mar-riage she set up a shop for him. The man wore that hat on his wedding day and later only on important occasions, and never bought a second hat, in commemoration of his teacher’s kindness. Old Peng had earned the undying gratitude and loyalty of the couple, and thought his sis months of nightly teaching labours well rewarded.

Having nothing to do, Poya’s eyes fell upon the Surangama Sutra standing upon the shelf, A sense of mystery about the character of Lslo Peng impelled him to open the book and find what it was in Buddhism that had influenced his friend’s character. He thumbed through the pages, and saw that it was ail about birth and death and sorrow and the errors of sense perceptions . But the many Sanskrit names and technical terms made it difficult for him

to read any passage through. It was Uke reading a telegram with

S hrases in code, or Hkc a Chinese reading a Japanese newspaper, ust as he was about to close the book and return it to its place, he caught the word “prostitute” in the first part. He paused to look.

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It was a nanative passage and easy to read and he glanced down the page: it was about the great assembly of the Edightened Ones before Buddha himself, and Buddha’s favourite disciple, Ananda, a bright yoting rnati had not yet appeared, but had gone on begging in the city:

Tien Ananda, tbou^tfd as ever, took his alms bowl and entered tie city be^ngfood from bouse to bouse in regdar order, bis only thought being to receive the offerings from all alike, even to the last danapati. It mattered not to Ananda whether the offering was small or generous, attractive or repulsive, whether tbe^ver was of the Kshatriya caste or the Candra caste; to him the all-important thing was to practise kindness and compassion toward all alike with no dscrimination whatsoever. , . .

While Anmda was beg§ng in orderly succession, he came to the bouse of a prostitute named Maudenka, who bad a beautiful dau^ter named Pcbiti. TUs young meuden was attracted by Ananddsyouthftd and hand-some person and pleaded earnestly with her mother to conjure the young

monk by the maffc spell of bramanyika. This the mother dfd am Ananda coming under the spell of its magic became fascinated by the charm of theyorngmeudena^ entered the bouse and her room. . . .

The Lard Buddha bad known all along what was happening to Ananda and now called Masgusti and bade him repeat the Great Dbarani at the place where Ananda was yielding to temptation. As soon as Man/usri reached the bouse, the maffc spm was broken and Aiumda regained Ins self-control. Matgusri encoura&d Amanda and Pcbiti and they retmwd with him to meet the Lard Bmdha.

He put the volume back in its place. Later he had occasion to remember the story and thought of Lao Peng as Manjusri.

• . *

Lost in thought, Poya did not notice the time passing. It was nearly eight o’clock when Peng returned.

"Sorry I’m so late,” said Peng, in a curiously high-pitched and fe minine voice that did not agree with his stee and height. IBs voice ■sras normally bw, but when excited, it readied t)^ high pitch of a child, singul^ly tense, and there were sentences spoken in high pitch and ending an octave lower; also there were rimas when his voice had a split <juality, as if the vocal cords were operating on both a high and a bw octave at the same time. In his

more emotional moments, the transitions from high to low pitch would be more frequent, and then he would stutter on the hi gTi pitch but not on me low. Wearing a discoloured old quilted gown, somewhat frayed and stained with a whole season’s dust at the sides, his appearance was frr from striking, apart from his unusual height and size. He wore a pair of silver-rimmed spectacles for near-sightedness, whidi gave him an earnest look, increased by the horizontal furrows on his tall forehead. Slightly bald at the front, his thin, greyish haic was long at the back and brushed back without parting, showing his magnificent forehead to advantage. It was the most practical way of weariag one’s hair, since it required no combing at aU; or rather, he combed it a hundred times a day by habitually running his fingers through it while talking. It was a square free, sUghuy fleshy, with a qxiiet, earnest look and a ready smile, with high cheekbones, compara-tively deep-set eyes, a broad nos^ and a very pleasantly formed mouth, prominent in the centre and curving downwards and side-ways, smped like that of a carp, and well supported by a broad lower jowl. The muscles of his free grouped themselves in lines < and convolutions that were familiar and kindly. His skin was strangely smootih and white for his age, and as he did not naturally have much of a beard, he let a t& moustadhe grow and assume its own pattern, without much trimming, so that the two sides of the thin moustache enclosed the middle like parentheses. When he laughed Ws lips receded and revealed a pinkish up^

gum and a row of even teeth, slightly tar-coated by escessiye smoking. Yet there was always a kindly look whidi the French would call ^mpatbuptf and which gave his free, combined with tihe high forehead and the grey, shaggy hair, a spiritual beauty of its own. At times, when he was speaking of what he loved, or what amused him, his mobile Ups would form' a rounded tunnel. TTae ojdy foreign influence in his dress was a pair of extrmely broad and big leather shoes, which he had made to order locally, insisting that there should be plenty of room for his toes. “The feet should shape the shoes, and not the shoes shape the feet,” he said As he never learned how to tie his shoestrings tightly, he often stopped in the middle of the road to tie them, and had indeed learned to ■walk with slow easy strides with the shoestrings unlaced. At one period, Poya had seen him go about without any lace at aU in one shoe, just because the lace had snapped and he

never remembered to buy a new one, until Poya bought a new pair and made him a present of them.

The old servant brought in a basin of hot water and placed it on a basin rack at one comer of the room neat the grajiiophone. While Peng was washing himself, energetically and noisily, the servant was busy bringing in the food.

^TDid you succeed?” asked Poya.

"Yes. Give me two thousand dollars,” replied hi.s friend, wringing his towel. It was like him not to say more.

"What for?”

"She wants amnninifion. She must send it to the W'estern Hills.”

Poya sat down first and Lao Peng came to the tabic, his face clean and fresh and eager for food.

"She says many young students and teachers of the North-eastern University are ready to join her, but they Jiavc no guns.”

The servant poured the wine. Poya looked at Peng and then at the servant.

'Tt’s all right. There’s no traer servant on earth,” Peng said, and went on. “I hate this killing. But if you go out into the country as I have, and see what is going on, the terrible massacre and the loss of homes, you will see that our people must be able to defend themselves. I am interested only in the people — what is happening to them. Hus is not a war between two armies. It is sheer banditry. The defenceless perish. Whole villages have b§en burned down.”

They lifted their cups and drank for a moment in silence.

“What would be your feelings,” resumed Peng, following his own thoughts, "if you saw mutilated bodies of boys on the road-side, and me gaunt, stiff bodies of peasant women, one lying face down, another fece up? What have these done to deserve death? And fhe children, women, old men, young men, the people of whole villages made homelws and wandering on the road, not knowing where they ate goingl You say to yourself, What have these poor, jjeaceful sujfeing people done? And you cannot ^wcr. You just stop thinking. That is why I came back. Some-thing must be done for them.”

"What are you going to do?”

“A little. Fm afraid very little. 1 can help a few with all in my power. The problem is too big for any one person. Ifowarethe

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milli ons of refugees starting for the interior going to live? But vre can help a few individuals, help them to live, and right some of the wrong that man has done to man. I'll take all the money I have and go inland and see what I can do. Mind you, these are ^ men — brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, grandmothers— all wanting to Live. That’s my job. Unlike you, I am free; I’ll go wherever I like

and stop wherever I am needed.”

Poya was shaken. He had never looked at the war from this human and personal point of view. He had followed its progress analytically; had studied maps, gauged the number and strength of forces in combat, analysed the statements of Qiiang Kaishek, forecast probable developments, and developed his own plan of strategy for the entire war. Not a detail, not a battle or a disposition of troops, had escaped his attention. He had arrived at the conclusion that holding the Chinese line at Shanghai was a tactical mistake and could not continue for much longer. In his larger view of the war, he had even included the imponderables — the strength of public morale and the conduct of enemy soldiers in Peiping and elsewhere. This had led him to the optimistic conclusion that Japan could never conquer China if his strategy were followed. He derived much comfort from the fact that the Kwangsi generals, Li and Pai, former enemies of Generalissimo Chiang Kaishek, had not only pledged a united fcoht but had thrown all their Kwangsi troops into the battle, and he was agreeably surprised that General Chang Tsechung, mistaken tor a traitor when he accepted control of Peiping after the retreat of the Twenty-ninth Army, had escaped in disguise, going to Tientsin on a bicycle as a son in mourning. It gave him courage and ftith in his strategy, for only with the support of the entire peoplecould a strategy of this kind succeed. It was a philosophic and purely strategic view of the war, but the fact that his strategy of a long war involved the burning of cities and untold suffering for millions of people uprooted from their homes, he had never thought of in

purely human terms as Old Peng was doing. His mind, with its mystical bent, saw only masses and not individuals, in a straggle of two national wills, and while he saw the migration of millions as a yd^onal drama, he had never looked upon it as a hu m a n drama, ■^th ‘‘brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, grandmothers.”

As Poya heard Lao Peng pronounce those words, the war suddenly became personal and alive, not a thing to be coldly

analysed. He suddenly saw that an intense human drama ol individual lives was being enacted by these millions of refugees constantly moving, struggling, living, laughing, hoping and dying, meeting hardships and self-sacrifices, with the parting and reunion of lovers and relatives and the strange joys and disappointments of wartime. It seemed that all his reasoning, his charts and maps, and strategies, had been a kind of impersonal patriotism, bom of the inteUect, acting as a screen which kept him from personal action of any sort. What his befuddled intellect had failed to see, Lao Peng had felt with his heart and now communicated to him simply, warmly, inevitably. He wanted to share in this Tintnatr drama and adventure. He was instinctively pleased with the prospect of acdon, which would satisfy an inner need of his tall body. His eyes glistened.

“Tell me what are you going to do? How and where?*’

“I am going inland, where the trouble is thickest. That is where one can do the most good, where the most lives can be saved.”

“The warpath?”

“Yes, the warpath.”

“And you have no plans, no organisation?”

^‘None. I don’t believe in organizations. No committees for me, where one sits and makes plans for others to carry out. How can one tell beforehand just where and how help is most needed, unless one goes and lives with the people? I anr going to orddrs firom nobody.”

. “How much good will that do to the country?”

*T don’t know. But a child saved is so much good done.”

“Ate individual lives so important as that?”

“Yes.”

Tmths generalized and debated upon have no meaning, but a tmth avowed sincerely in a given moment, and to be acted upon, has all the force and reality of the &ce and voice of the person

who speaks it. ‘

“When are you leaving?”

“As soon as I can get the money. Banking is disrupted. lean
remit money only to Shanghai.”

After d^et Poya lit his pipe and sat musing. Lao Peng stood
stnoking in the nuddle of the room and looking at a newspaper
^d close to the light. There was not much news to read except
Domei dispatches of Japanese victories. He threw the paper on

the table and walked up and down the room, then lit anntlief
cigarette and settled in one of the rattan chairs, his eyes watching
Poya through his large spectacles.

“You know this Mrs. Chao is a most wonderful woman. She
is an old woman, fifty or sixty, totally illiterate, as she told me.
She is hiding in this city. I admire her courage. She didn’t ask
me for help when I went to see her. She just demanded it, and
no one could refuse her.”

“How much did you promise?”

“I promised to raise two thousand dollars for her— with you
in mind.” -

“That’s all tight. . . . Where is she going to buy the ammunition?”

“Right in the city. There is plenty of it, abandoned by the Twenty-ninth Army and gathered by ihe puppet police. You can get it if you go about it the right way and pay the price. And she is going to smuggle it out to her band in the hills herself.”

“What is she like? Is she very strong, like one of our women bandits?”

“You are entirely mistaken. She looks just like a sweet, respectable grandmother, walking with fisiirly steady steps.”

“Extraormnaryl”

“She is &om Manchuria, and she has been doing this ever since 1932. The people from the North-east mre tasted Japanese rule and know what it is to live under them. I spoke to her about what I saw in Tsohsien, the murder and rape and looting. She said it was all an old story in the North-east and it is just beginning to happen in C h i n a proper. She knows the Japanese Army too weU. There was a funny thing she said. ‘The damned Japs are worse than our banditsl If there were no war, we would have been aficaid of them just -fitom hearsay. But when you see them murder and rob and bully women and old people, just being ungentlemanly, you lose all

feat of them. You simply despise theni. Heaven gave us this war, to put our people and their soldiers together side by side, to show who are superior as human beings. You toow,', she said, 'no one can conquer a people when they despise the conqueror.' "

"That fits perfectly into my theory," sdd Poya, relapsing into his phUosophic mood, puffing away at his pipe. "It is perfectly

apparent. And if we follow the correct strategy, we'll win. It's the only way we can win,"

"Tell me again your strategy," said Lao Peng.

"We must understand the cb^cter of this war," said Poya, the young "It is not a war in the usual sense of the word, a

between two armies equally matched on the battlefield. It is gt>ing to be a trar against an entire people. The Japanese are §oing to take STiangTiai, and after that they are going to take Nanking, and they are going to blockade the sea coast. That is as clear as day-light. And then s^ what happens. If Ghinese morale breaks, then rhino is finished, but if it doesn't, then the war becomes a totally problem. The whole coast must be abandoned. All

coastal cities will be taken by the enemy and those millions of people must either accept slavery or flee inland. The burden of the war will then fell upon the common people, and the common people must be able to take it, must submit to horrible hardships and privations. But in order to have the morale to stand up under these su6fetings, every Chinese must hate the Japanese. Therefore, the Japanese soldiers must continue to be as brutal and beastly as they are now. Cities must be burned, old homesteads must be abandoned, peasants must leave their farms and cattle. No nation has ever done that conscioiKly, willingly. You have read War and Peace; the Russians didn't bum Moscow by conscious plan and purpose. You can't make the people forsake their homes unless the enem.]^ is estraordinarily brutal. Not mere killing and cruelty, which is true in all war; the. people must be treated like slaves. There must be no security for any person working with or against the enemy; it must be unsafe .-for farmers' and merchants' daughters, mothers, and sisters. Even then you cannot force a whole people to abandon their homes and burn their cities; every person who is forced to flee must have had a personal experience so hu m ili a ting, so inhuman, that he has no choice between fuuthcr humiliations and a wandering refugee existence. Even that is not enough; the people must have seen something so revolting that it outrages their common notions of femily refetionships and their moral conscience." Poya went on in his cold, analytic manner. "And by that I mean wives must be raped in their husbands' presence and daughters in their fathers' presence, feibies must be bayoneted throi^h the bdly, prisoners of war must be burned alive or dig their own graves and bury each other alive. There

must be open copulation. Fantastic, you say; it is demanding too much from the Japanese Army, that they behave not like conquering soldiers, but like brutes. But all this is happening. And it is imp ortant that there be no discrimination between classes; the enemy must not only violate farmers' daughters, but must rob the rich as well; big firms must be confiscated and shops must be broken into; chattels must be burned or broken; the enemy must steal like the most despicable bandits. Then all military operations! lose significance."

"You don't know what you are saying," said Lao Peng. ^Tll tell you what the farmers told me at Tsohsien. The Japs cut up a cow and ate her alive. Imagine what a farmer felt when he saw tVii»in take his cow, suspend her upside down on a pole, and cut her up, each soldier sticking his bayonet into her joints and cutting a sUce and eating it raw, and the cow mooing in agony and the soldiers laughing and guf&wihg and playing jiu-jitsu by her side!"

"I did not expect all this from (he Japs," said Poya. "Why in Heaven's name do the Japanese people allow their soldiers so to disgrace themselves if they want to conquer China? The Japanese Array is really worse than everybody thought. That is why I

wasn’t so sure of our victory, but now I am. After the war, I am • going to Japan and study that country.”

Poya paused, his pipe having gone out. Lao Peng had listened intently, noticing that his friend’s voice was strangely calm in contrast to the vehemence of his speech.

"You talk lightly of human sufferings. Brother Poya. You talk as if you were wishing these cruelties and sufferings upon our

am not wishing them upon our people; I am merely do srrihing the character of this war and what is involved.^^You admit that it is, and will be, a war agamst an entire people.”

The fiTfw ws on Lao Peng’s brow deepened. "Yes, yes. A war against an entire people. Yow don’t know what yoq are talking about until you go out into (he country and see it. . . . But this tmibleiacial hatred— how long that will lasti I imagine that for fifty years our people will not forget what they saw and went through. It is not good for the Japraesc, you know. Out petmle will have a low opinion of those neighbours across the sea, after what they have seen of them. And doii’t forget: hatred may be

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fotgotten, but not contempt. Once you lose respect for yout

enemy, you lose it for ever. Mrs. Chao is right. You can't conquer a people when they despise the conquerors."'

"The Japanese must be conscious of this," said Poya. "At bottom, that is why they are so sensitive about the honour of the Tm perial Army and insist on the people saluting their sentries, to recover some self-respect for themselves."

"But what of your strategy?"

*T have told only half of ihe story — ^that our people must be able to take it. Of that I am sure. I am not so sure of the other half. This, as I say, is a unique war. History will not give us a second example. Suppose Japan conquers the coast and our people migrate inland, leaving only the scorched earth. Suppose we are willing to bum our own cities and suppose millions of people are willing to abandon or are driven away from their homes. And suppose our morale does not break, that the soldiers have lost all feat of the Japanese and the people ate united to fight to the end. Still success depends upon a number of factors. The Japanese will blockade the coast while trying to invade a con-tinem, getting deeper and deeper into it. We have the entire continent to retreat into; we have land, and that means we have time. We must saaifice some land and fight to gain time. We must use the natural advantages of land and numbers and formu-late a strategy of protracted resistance, or we are lost. Out coast and the Yangtse River, the entire Yangtse basin, arc vulnerable, but the rest of the territory is mountainous. While inflicting the

greatest losses on the enemy, to slow down their advance, we must keep our main army intact and well supplied with trained recruits. But if our resistance is to continue— -and our only hope is to force a long war— we must build up an entire state in the interior. That means we must do two things at the same time. While fightii^ and holding off the invader, we must be able to opm up the interior and organize a material base for protracted resistance. Was there ever such a war fought before? Imagine the number of things that have to be done. Roads must be opened rivers dredged, communications extended, new industrial centres set up; recruits must be trained, the people must be organized, schools and umversities must go inland, epidemics must be pre-v^cd. At Ae same time, guerrillas and enough regulars must be left near the occupied areas to harass the enemy and prevent

consolidation of thek gains. jAjid for this the enemy must also continue to behave like bandits in the occupied areas, as they are doing. And there must be no betrayals by our generals. All these things would be possible only on the assumption of an extremely high morale kept up by a strong and courageous leadership. If the people have the slightest doubt, if they think that their leaders are not going to carry through or are wavering in their determination, they w2l not be willing to make all the sacrifices. Only so can rhifia win. Our people must be good, very good, and the Japanese Army must be bad, very bad, before all this can happen. If we do all this, it will be die greatest miracle of history."

"Poya, come with me,” said Lao Peng. '*We can do something together. This place is s tifling you. You have never been to the interior. You are a fine tactician, but what is all this talk good for? Out there it is all so different. You will feel better, travelling and seeing the people and doing things.. And I need your company. It was silly,” continued Lao Peng, ^ow we used to drink and weep. We’ll drink together in the evenings, but no more weeping.”

'Tve b^ thinking,” said Po;fa slowly.

“I know what is the trouble with you. You are too rich — you and yoxir wife and your way of living.”

"That is not the point.”

"That pair of shoes on your feet will save two orphans’ lives — /wes, I mean. Bring your wife too. She looks like a strong person and she is a college graduate. We need a woman in the kind of work I am going to do.” _ '

‘ ^‘You have mistaken me,” said Poya. "I am as ftce as you ate. I may join you, but as for my wife, there is no ch^ce of that. She is too rich, not me. I cotddn’t even discuss this wiA her. I’ve been tkinTring of these things all alone until I am sick.”

“What’s the matter?”

"Marriage is a curious affair. I thought I was going to marry a bii^utiful body and I got one. She was a basketball player at college— b eautiful thighs and aU^ t. Well, marriage has changed her. PerhapO've changed Tier. But it's all over. I have been cruel to her, I know. But I couldn't help it. You know I've not been an ideal husband, and she knows it. Now, there is Malin."

"Who is Malin?"

"She is a friend of my aunt Lola. She has been staying in out house the last three weeks. She wants to go to Si^ghai,

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but there is no one to go with her, and she is left on our hands, or on nay hands, as nay wife probably suspects."

'*Oh, I see. Young man's troubles."

^*1 think I have been falling in love these last few days. She is sc beautiful that I don't trust nay senses. . . . This sense of illusior and the mystery about her — I hardly know a thing about her— sometimes make me frightened, and I say to myself, 'She can't be real.' Then when I see her she is very real. Sometimes she is simple and childish, and sometimes she is very knowing and pro- found. Her eyes are sad, but her lips are gay, and I like both hej

gaiety and her sadness, and I cannot think, but simply feel happy in her presence. If that's being in love, then I am in love."

Lao Peng looked at his young ftiend with a look of deep concern. "Are you taking her to Shanghai?"

"That may be what I'm going to do. My wife wants to go back to her parents in Shanghai, and has been asking me to take her. Then Malin will also go with us. Don't smile. I'll send my wife to her parents, and then I'll be ftee."

"You ate not deserting her?"

'Terhaps it is that. Sometimes I accuse myself. There was a period when we were happy. And she was very kind to me when I was taking the cure for heroin. But it is all over now. I've said harsh words to her. She must have been hurt terribly. But that was a year ago. Since then I have watched her going about enjoying herself and her parties and her damned wealth — my wealth."

• "And you think that is wrong?"

^ "My God, how self-satisfied she is with her wealth! She gives a big party and invites all her friends — ^it's all a matter of show — and then she will not talk with them, but smiles that horrible smug, stiqjid smile and watches her guests talk. I tell you she is just stupid, too stupid even to be sociable. She used to enjoy her sports, but.now that she has given up her sports for manicuring, ^e has no interests except parties and gossip and her confounded

jeweUery. What can I talk to her about? You’ve never been married to one of these edmtted girls,” His stress on the word “educated” was contemptuous. “What is marriage for? Give-and-take, isn’t ii? There used to be purpose to marriage in a large fiurdly, giving birth to children and serving one’s relations. Or if you, take a mistress, she does her best to please you, and you get something in return. The mistr^s works hard to serve you and

give you pleasure. Anyway she does not take the attitude that a wife takes, that because she holds a wedding certificate, she is entitled to enjoy all that is yours without doing a rliing in, return. The wife is too well protected. She is too sure of herseE That is her trouble.”

"That may be true. She may be stupid. But don’t blame a poor girl for being a little dazzled when she is married into your luxurious home.”

"No poor girl should marry into a luxurious home. She can’t stand it.” Poya’s face showed torment.

"Well, as your ftiend, I don’t know what to say. Your wife may be a jewel or she may be trash. I’ve seen her only once. But wlut about this Malta? What are you going to do about her?”

“Oh, Malinl I can’t make up my mind.”

“Wl^t is troubling you?”

“It may be my imagination. She is Lola’s firiend, invited by her to stay with us. She will never speak of her femily. Perhaps it is Lola’s idea to marry her to me. You know Lola.”

"You don’t mean your aunt is plotting against your wife?”

"I shouldn’t be surprised if she were.”

"Aren’t you too suspicious because you are wealthy?”

"Perhaps I am. But she is small and charming, like the delicate southern women, you know. Sometimes she looks like an innocent girl — oh, I can’t describe her.”

"Do you think you can carry on with your war strategy and be mixed up with a woman?”

‘Tf she is of the right kind, yes. But this is all my imagination— I have not even made love to her. I’ll take them both to Shanghai. I have business afi^rs to settle with my uncle, Afei, who is. there. If all goes well. I’ll join you. Can’t you come to Shanghai with me?”

‘Tm a&aid not. I shall follow the warpath.”

Poya looked at his watch and rose to go. He would not be able to get home i£ he stayed past ten o’clock. As he stood near the door, Lao Pe:^ put lus hands on his shoulders and asked, “How does Malin look?’’

“What do you mean?”

“I mean what type is she? You said she was small?”

“Yes,” replied Poya, surprised. "Like a small bird feeding firom one’s hand.”

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"That means something. Tell me mote.”

"What can I say? She always has a sweet smile and she bites her nails.”

"Well,” said Lao Peng, after a pause, as if he were trying to picture the girl he had not seen, "think well of her until you find you should think the contrary.”

"Ate you a reader of feces?”

“No, just a knowet bf human hearts.”

"But you haven’t seen her.”

“What you’ve said is quite enough. She may cliange your destiny. I know you already, and I think I know one half of Malin. So I know three-fourths of what you ate going to do.”

"Do you want to meet her and see her? I want your advice.”

“That’s not necessary. ' Just tell me what is her voice like?”

"It’s a kind of gurgle.”

Lao Peng looked up sharply, as if he had caught something significant.

"She has a red birthmark under her ear,” Poya added, as an afterthought.

Lao Peng did not seem to think that this added anything to what he had already learned, but merely said, "Well, think well of her. You never can tell what is in a woman.”

CHAPTER II

In the dark alley, Poya tradged homeward, perplexed and agi-
tated. .He was naturally strong of constitution and had no need
of an overcoat in that October evening. A short distance led liim
to Nansiaochieh again. The street lights were so far apart that in
places he could not clearly see the road, which was by no means
even. He was so wrapped in thought that he jogged along in
slow, long strides, without iwing his flashlight, unmindful of the
ups and downs and sharp ruts cut in the mud by mule carts and
rickshaws. Here and there the eating places for rickshaw pullers
were still open, their dim oil lamps giving out streams of black
smoke, visible fifty yards away in that general darkness.

What Lao Peng had said at parting puzaled him greatly. A
strange m a n, Lao Peng. He had said that Ma lin might changie his

destiny. Of course, Lao Peng knew him thoroughly, out.
But he had not seen Malin and had heard only what he said of her.
Lao Peng had spoken so dearly. Did biting one’s nails
anything to h i m ? Poya had intended to come and ask his advice,
then had forgotten about it and talked about the war, and only at
parting had he said those few words about Malin. Moreover, Lao
Peng idn’t seem at all to disapprove of his intention to desert his
wife. He had said that Kainan was perhaps a jewel, or perhaps
trash. Possibly Lao Peng had dedded already t^t she was fragh
without saying so. A strange man, Lao Pengl

At the comer where he left Nansiaodiieh, he saw the policeman again, leaning against a pole with his baton hanging from his waist. He was shivering in the cold and seemed almost asleep.

“How’s the night, lao bsiung?”

The policeman started and saluted, and then recognizing gave him a friendly smile.

“Going home, Yao sbaqyebl'*

“Yes.”

Poya slipped a dollar note into his hand and the policeman took it wifh protestations of gratitude and unworthiness.

**Sbaqyeh, you are kind. I am always receiving frvours from you. A family of five mouths, mifatse!” said the policeman shamefecedly. “Are our guerrillas still at Mentoukou?”

“I hear so. Good night.”

“Be careful in the dark.”

“I have my flashlight.”

Poya walked on, aossing the mud alleys and vacant ground

that he knew so well. The night was deathly stilL The peddlers of midnight food who used to thr^d the different butmg had gone, because of the curfew law at night. The sky was clear, as the Peiping autumn sky always was, and Poya went along undet' the starlight without using his flashlight, for he did not want to attract attention. Why did he say that Malin bit her nails, when he was called upon to describe her? Did it indicate anything about her training, her temperament, her wilfulness, or her childishness? Or was it her chama? Yes, Malin always bit her nails, and chuckled a soft, low chuckle. He was sure now that he wanted to go inland— Lao Peng's few words had convinced him— and Lao Peng had asked if he could carry on with his thoughts of war stratagenis and romance at the same time. He was sure that

Kaiflifi, his wife, would not want to go kland with him. Would Malin?

It was not till he reached his home that- he came out of his meditations. The doorman, Lao Lin, waiting for him to return at his regular hour, came to open the door, llie Garden of Quiet and Suitability, or the Prince's Garden as it was locally called, consisted of mote than ten courts, large and small, separated by winding corridors and moon doors and pebble walks and hidden yards, so secluded that one could imagine oneself shut out from

the entire world. Half of the courts were deserted since the departure of his relatives to the South. The echoes of the empty courts and the fentastic shadows thrown by his flashlight would havefirighteneda stranger. Granduncle Feng, he knew, would be waiting for his return. What made Kaiaan so unhappy was the feet that, since the fell of Peiping, they had been told by Grand-uncle Feng, the senior head of the femily, not to give any more parties, not to admit ordinary callers, nor to go out. The main gate was usually locked in the daytime, the inmates and servants using a side door in the back garden, known as Peach-Clouds Little Resting-Place. Only nine people and some servants were living now in this huge deserted mansion, and there were no chi^en's voices. There were Granduncle Feng and his wife, their sons Tan and Tsien, the former married to Lola, and the old Manchu <»uple, Mr. and Mrs. Tung, the parents-in-law of his uncle Afei, and Poya himself and his wife Kainan. The grand-uncle, being a businessnmn over sixty, and extremely cautious by temperament and training, had warned them even against min g the telephone, except on strictly business occasions.

"No politics and no discussion of current news over the tele-phone, you young , people," said the grey-haired granduncle. His nminet suggested more necessity for caution than his words.

Wem it not for the American flag we would not be able to live in pwce. It might be taken over by the authorities or used for billeting soldiers and then where would wc be? Poya, and Tm and Tsien, you young men, I warn you. And you women-

folk, remember the times we arc living in.” The word "authori-
ties’ was tte granduncle’s regular way of referring to the
Japanese or the puppet r^ime, for he would never perrmt hims elf
^use the word enemy,” much less a direct mention of “Japan.”
The old mans concern over the safetv of his son®

daughtets-in-law was pathetic. Although this garden belonged
to the Yao family, of which Poya was the senior grandson, Grand-
uncle Feng, brother of Poya’s dead grandmother, was by right oi
his age the actual head of the &mily. But all this prudent advice
of the old man only increased their sense of imprisonment, of
captivity in their own home, and of utter boredom on the part of
the young women, none of whom had any children. Poya’s
nightly visits to Lao Peng were his only relasation, and the grand-
uncle, being more respectful to the grandson of the Yao family
than to his own sons, had not interfered, although he inwardly
disapproved.

Before turning east to his own rooms, he heard the rattle of
mahjong from a distant courtyard, and he knew that the ladies
were playing it for the night, to kill time. These games used to
last into the small hours of the morning, but Poya bad not joined
them until recently, after Malin caine. This was one of the points
that esasperated his wife. He used to keep late hours, reading
Qiiang l^shek’s commentary on the Great Learamg and the
GoUett Mecm, while his wife either slept or played mahjong with

Aunt Lola and Unde Tan. His wife disapproved of his reading Giiang Kaishek's writings, while he disapproved of his wife's mahjong and often refused to join the game. But since Malin's coming to stay with Lola, he had joined several times and seemed to enjoy it, and he did not even trouble to explain this change in his opinion of mahjong. And he always won.

As he approached the court, the rattle of mahjong grew loudet and he could hear the thin, high-pitched laughter of Lola and the peculiar warm gurgle of h^&lin's voice. The ladies were so enjoying themsews that they did not hear Poya's steps until ^ stood before them. Malm greeted him. "Poyal Will you join us?" ; •

"The old man asked whether you were home, several times," said Lola, turning. "You know he always asks. I told him not to worry."

Poya merely said "Ohl" while he surveyed the party. His wife had ignored bitn as a wife had the right to ignore a husband, and fixed her eyes on the game. It alvrays surprised Pop how Kainan, who would get confused at the most elementary arithmetic, could count up the scores at roahjong. Tsien, the younger brother, a' young man of twenty-two, was playing with them. Malin looked

up to Poya with a smile of enthusiasm and ■wholehearted admiration. Her head •was tilted to one side, and under the long curls falling to her shoulders Poya saw the red birthmark beneath her ear that had fascioated him &om the first. It ■was the face of a mature young girl who was not ashamed to be looked at with the closest scrutiny. It ■was a face that might be called an invitation to love.

*Tind a chair and sit down," said Lola cordially. "After this round you can take my place, or Jimmy's."

"No, thank you, Fd rather not play to-night."

Lola was only twenty-five and had the ait of a young woman perfectly at home in the society of young men, gay and sociable and ready to be helped like a lady. A graduate of high school without having been to college, she had what is called an integrated person^ty, with no conflicts, taboos, complexes, or inhibitions. The world for modem women -was to her a good world. She adored the West and ever3rthing modem. Not that she was a feminist. She simply loved the West and believed that the pMadise for women had already arrived in the West, She had a notion that Western men aU had the maimets of gentlemen and she had a keen admiration for Western women, who seemed to her a race of physically robust females, strong and free. All this made her very gay and confident. It would be impossible to imagine Lola tormented by problems of womanhood, ancient or

modem, of votes for women, of vocationalism, e^ven of divorce ■and the “double standard of morality.” Every problem had been settled by the West already; men had achnitted that they were wrong in suppressing women; there was no argument; all that Chinese women had to do was to have faith that the millunnium for women had arrived, thanks to Western influence, and to act on that faith. But it all resolved itself into a few simple things, like being helped into a car first, being helped into an overcoat, remaining seated when a man entered a room and offering or not offemg one’s hand to be shaken, dependmg on who the young man’s faAer or unde was, and keeping a sharper look-out on the husband|s movements and mafai-ginifig the right to open the husband’s letters, but not to have one’s own letters opened. The mastery of Western dviliaation is by no means difficult.

Her n a me , lola, was p^osely suggestive of foreign names, having no meaning in Uiinese, and when she married Tan, her

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husband became Dan to bet. With the same feminine aptness, she thought of an English name, “James,” for her husband’s brother Tsien; this amounted to a triumph, for it was surprising how nearly alike the Chinese and English names sounded. From “James” it became “Jimmy,” and Tsien liked it because Lola had always been kind and generous to him. This happy choice of an

English name for Tsien was characteristic of Lola’s simplicity of mind and method. Like so many modem ladies who have gone through a missionary high school on the coast, her pronunciation of English was marvellously correct, though her Imowledge of Englis h was limited strictly to the “conversational English manual” level. It was amusing to hear Lola refer to her &ther-in-law as “papa,” pronounced “p’paw.” She talked much of “Western civilization’’ which was often shortened to“civili2ation” {penmin^, and the problems of wenming, or of being “civiliaed and modern” were also simple. The word was used essentially in the sense in which women, whether in Ankara or Buenos Aires, declare thek modernity. A few trips to the beauty shop could complete the spiritual metamorphosis, plus the courage to appear in public in men’s arms, and letting their husbands hold ^eir babies for a change, and some knowledge of vitamins. Now that Lola was going to have a baby, she was assiduously reading up the technique of modem molierhood, and taking orange juice regularly everymorning, because it contained vitamin D.

Lola sent a maid to imorm the granduncle that Poya had come home. Poya took a seat and watched the game. All the ladies* seemed conscious of Poya’s presence, for he was the type ladies takft cognizance of. Mann asked if he was comfortable, and Lola {asked if he would have tea and fruit while they went on withtheic game. Kainan was shent, wondering why he stayed when he was not playing. She had been glad that since Lao Peng’s return to the city he had spent the evenings outside rather than at home.

' Poya was unable to take his eyes off Malin. Both Malin and Lola wore gowns split high at the sides, and Lola had red velvet slippers. Lola’s fece, while not particularly beautifu^ was thin and smooth and well formed, such a &ce as a lipstick and an ^ebrow pencil could make pretty in any young gkl, and although jhey were at home, Lola had not neglected her make-up. But Malin’s gorgeous black hak and soft, white jGace and constant imile had that something more, seen in a flower in full bloom or

in a gitl of twenty-two, which we call exuberance. The surface of her skin seemed to suffuse a soft light, as different from a ftet depending on cream and powder as natural teeth differ from false The little touch of rouge on her lips and the little red mark imde her ear gave emphasis to the white fece surrounded by the blaci wavy mass of her hair. There was a slight defect in her eyes, which might be called a squint if it had been more, but which h her case was so slight that it gave her face an inimitable i& dividuality, as if she was looking at the world from a special point of view of her own, as indeed she did.

“Peng!** said Kainan, with a tone of vengeance in her loud, ringing voice.

“Ho!** Malin foUowed and turned her pieces down, with a soft

exultant gurgle.

While they were shuffling the pieces, Malin said: ‘Toys bsimg, I want so much to see Siat portrait of Redjadc.”

“Haven’t you seen it yet?” asked Poya.

“No, the Qiungmintang is locked,” said Lola.

Malin wanted to stop playing and talk. Her youthful voice easily carried across the room. “I was looking at the album and saw a photograph of a very beautiful girl. Was that Redjadc?”

“I don’t Imow which one you mean,” said Lola. “Tliere it is, Poya, on the Ijottom shelf.”

“Are we going to continue or not?” asked Kainan a litth grumpily.

“Oh, let’s test a little,” replied Malin.

Poya got up and took out* large volume with black covers aad, began turning the pages, smiling to himself.

“Imust see it ag^” said MWSn and left her scat and went oto; to sit on the soft beside Poya. She was wearing a black sado! gown, and Poya felt a soft velvety contact that was warm and' agreeable. ‘Tet me find it,” said ISfalin. As she ran through tie

pages to look for the picture, Poya saw her soft, white ha^
whose beauty was marred by a disgracefully bitten nail <»‘
' the^ forefinger. Malin’s ftce showed an excited and pleasant
curiosity, and murmurs of amusement alternated with lifii
laughter, while Poya smelled a subtle fragrance tha t stirred tii
senses.

“Is that Redjade?” exclaimed Malin in a low voice.

*‘No, that is Aunt Mulan, when she was a girl.”

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They were soon lost in intervals of absorbed silence and
amused chuckles.

Poya was very communicative, and photographs of the elder'
‘generation, with their out-of-date costumes, afforded them great
amusement. There were pictures of Redjade and her brothers.
Tan and Tsien, as young children, and of Poya’s uncles and aunts,
■of Mulan, Mochow, Coral and Mannia, and of the Tseng relatives.
Malin took keen interest in all of them and in what Poya was
telling her, especially of Redjade, who had killed herself when she
was a girl of nineteen because of love for her cousin Afei. When
they came to the photograph of Redjade, she stared at it for a long
time.

“Why are you so much interested in Redjade?” asked Poya.

“Because her life was so romantic and so tragic. Lola told me all about her. Can I see her portrait?”

“Of course. To-morrow, if you like. But I have interrupted your game.”

Mann went back to the table with her lithe step. For a few moments Poya again stood watching silently. Malin pretended to be absorbed in her game, but her eyes showed that she was aware of him looking on, and her lips had a smile oi adventure. He said good night and went to his own room, imagining that he still felt a isoft warmth in contact with the right side of his l:}ody.

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The next day after lunch, Poya went to Lola’s court-yard to* keep the appointment with Malin. Finding Lola and her husband and Malin stUl at lunch, he went over to the court of Tan’s parents to give his greetings of the day and to learn any neVs of the business.

Although now well over sixty, old Feng was stiUable to attend to his business and usually went to his shop in the morning. His health probably profited ftom this regularity of habits, for he had seldom been Imown to be late to his shop one out of the three

hundred and sixty-five days of the year. It was strange that, although so regular himself, he allowed his sons to lead disorderly lives, but this was to be explained by his over-solidtous love for his children, which in his old age was stiU the dominant motive of his life. He had put both his sons through college, but he did not eapect them to take up his business. Although he would not

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admit it, he was actually afraid of his sons, who had a modem education, while he had not even had a rcgxjlar old-school training. Tan seemed to be able to discuss so many things above his head; he was apparently a success at college, having won many prizes. But all this had proved unfortunate for the young man, who seemed to have thus lost the proper guidance of the ciders at home, as is the case of many young people of the day. The abrupt gap in knowledge between the older and the younger generation caused a break in parental influence over the young, who thought they knew a great deal from their college education, but remained crude in manners and ignorant of the elementary rules of living. Tan had developed conceit and a pseudomature, cynical tone in all his talks, and neither his father nor his mother Was able to check him. So although Old Feng slaved all his life for his sons, and even at this age was concerned solely for their welfere, it would be as exact to say that he feared his sons as to say that he doted on them. When Tan married Lola, a thoroughly

modem girl, his attitude became one of avoiding them rather than controUmg them. When he became angry with their lazy lives, their mahjong, and their late hours of rising, his only way of venting his anger was to scold his innocent, timid old wife.

Lola had an easy attitude of equality and independence toward her parents-in-law. She had a perfectly simple philosophy of life, "to be fait to anyone who was mx to her," as she often said aloud, even in her patents' presence. Although she lived in peace with her parents-in-law, the aedit was due to her mother-in-law ratlter than to herself. There was a britde quality in her voice and in j W temper which scared the old man, for when Lok gtumblc^^ grumbled doud and could be heard distinctly in old Mrs. I^Vs court. This was her idea of being fair and putting eveqBj^g above-board, and the mother-in-kw, being one who all ni|K» had been used to yielding and submission, usually kept quietTod Feng grumbled in his wife's presence about the behaviour of the young couple, but in the presence of Tan and particularly of Lola, he relapsed Into his soft and gentle manner. Thus Tan and Lok had matters very much their own way, while the old parents lived a totally difiifcsrent life of their own. To Poya, Old Feng was always very courteous. °

'Toya," he said in a patticukrly gracious manner, "you be very careful. It is unsafe to go out at nigW'

“I am careful. Granduncle. I can’t stay indoors all the time, and one has to have someone to talk to. I only go to see Lao Peng.”

'fBut don’t go to the night clubs and get mixed up in brawls with the drunken soldiers of the ‘authorities.’ ”

“You can rest assured of that.”

Old Feng came nearer and whispered in his ear with an air of secrecy; “You know. Tan and Tsien are young, and I am keeping them indoors. But there are so many young women in the house, I am afraid that they will go about and be seen by the ‘authorities.’ You should help to keep them indoors. Let them play mahjong or do anything so long as they are willing to stay at home.” He spoke in a still lower whisper. “There’s that young woman, Lola’s friend. She is not a relation of otirs. When is she going to leave? Gin you ask Lola?”

“Well,” said Poya with a smile, “she has been waiting for someone to get her out of the city and accompany her to Shanghai. My wife has been wanting to go south to live with her parents, and I may take them both down.”

“Get them out of here, the sooner the better. It will relieve my worries.”

“You’ll get into trouble,” said Mrs. Feng to her husband, “if Lola hears you say that. Poya, you know how to put it, and do not say that your granduncle said it.”

At Lola’s court they had fboished lunch and were discussing the sirar news. The town of Lotien was the scene of the bitterest Sghting for over a month, having changed hands two or three dmes already.

“Our soldiers can fight,” said Malin.

“How can China fight?” remarked Tan in his usual tone of jseudomature cynicism, which was both assumed and habitual viththim. A comfortable snicker revealed his white teeth; “It is iheer stupidity. You talk oftheQiinese air force. Why doesn’t it)omb the Japanese flagship Id!(umo, anchored right on the J(7hampoo? That ship has been there for two months.” ’

“But didn’t our men try to mine it one night?” asked Malin.

“Yes,” answered Tan with a snort, “and then the Japanese omed the searchlight on the party in the sampan in mid-river lefore they could get near enough to lay the mine. And when out acn on the opposite shore saw it, they got desperate and turned he switch, and the mine eiqilode^ Wiling our o'^ men. It was

childish.” As Malin -was quiet. Tan went on. "Out men ate not ptopetly ttained. Our people ate so ignotant. How many of om soldiers have had even a secondary education? How many have received a college education? What do they know about modem warfiaxe? If I werethe Japanese general, I would leave the Shanghai area alone and sail up the Yangtse and cut it from the rear.”

It twis at this point that Poya returned. Tan stopped short abruptly, for he fought shy of engaging in conversation with Poya, although the latter was his nephew. Nor had Poya wished to discuss the war with Tan. Touching up her face, Malin looked up to Poya with a full, winsome smile.

“Oh, we were talking about the war. Tell us what you think.” Her tone and look implied that she thought a great deal of Po3ra’8 opinion.

“What were you discussing?” said Poya. He saw that Tan’s fece was flushed, with his flow of speech unhappily cut short.

“Tan was saying that our people arc uneducated and our soldiers are ignorant about modem warferc.”

“Isn’t it just ideal?” answered Poya,with a tone of authority. “They are ignomnt, and don’t know the strength of the enemy artillery and aircraft. That is why they will never know when they

are beaten, why they have held the line for twf) montlis against
combined acrid, land, and naval bombardment. They don’t
know it and will never know it and tliat’s why they will keep cm
.fighting.”

Provoked and excited by this remark. Tan overcame his fear of
Poya and remarked: “Then why does Chiang Kaishek allow m
soldip to be killed at such a rate, division after division destroyed ■
in a few days?” ■'

Poya^d not intended argument. He himself believed that the
line at Kiangwm was untenable, being within the range of tb
naval guns, and that holding this line was probably a tactical'
remark in that cynical tone about rh;«n»
K^h^ his hao, irritated him greatly, and he now wantedto
detend his tactics.

Why, Chiang Kaishek has his reasons. Political reasons.
International r^ons. And even military reasons. Morale h '
v^at we are losing in men we are gaining in monk ■
stow of splendid courage and the fighting quality of ow

troops. It.wiU be a long war, and to carry on the long war flje

confidence of the people and the army must first be established , by galfitng this great initial impetus to morale."

Tan's &ce was tense, but he did not say more.

"Come," said Poya to Malin. "You want to see the Chiing-'mintang. Do you want to come, too. Aunt Lola?"

"No. We have seen the portrait so many times."

So Malin went away with Poya. She was dressed in a fine black French eripe de Chine, bought from a shop on Morrison Street. The gown was thinly padded with silk wool, and she was wearing an emerald armlet tla&t pleasantly set off her white arm. She walked with quick steps, at great variance with Poya's sauntering gait. Poya was wearing a sports jacket and baggy flannel trousers and Oxford loafers, winch seemed to suit his tall sauntering figure, fully a head taller than his companion. He had learned to dress in the English style from his English-educated unde Afei.

They had to thread their way through corridors and side doors, passing through several courts, before they came out to the open walk lined by tall elms and cypresses. The Chungmintang lay about fifty yards away to the cast of the walk.

"It made my blood boil to hear Tan talking about what he

would do if he were the Japanese general.” It was the first time Malin had expressed any opinion of Tan, and it seemed to bring them to a doser degree of intimacy. But Malin had observed that Po3^ plainly never had much respect for Tan.

“What did he say?” asked Poya nonchalantly.

“He said that if he were the Japanese gene^, he would leave the Shanghai area alone, sail up Ae Yangtsc, and cut our army ficom the rear.”

"Do you bdieve it is all so simple as all that?”

“No. But what I don’t like is the tone in which he said it.”

‘Tfou don’t like him, do you?”

“No. He seems to know so much, or thinks he does.”

^TIow do you like his brother?”

'*You mean Jimmy?”

‘*Yes. Call him Tsien.”

Malin laughed and blushed a little. Thek eyes met.

‘T think he has fallen in -love, with rue.” .

“What makes you think so?”

"Oh, a girl always can tell. He is abashed and he wants to do everything for me.”

5 *

“Do you mind?” Their eyes met again, and Malin laughed.

“Oh, he is So childish, so sentimental — ^he hlushcs like a girl.”

Poyadre-wasigh. “He is not a bad fellow. Much preferable to his brother.”

^ Malin gave another of her low, soft chuckles. “The ■wsj Jimmy — ^Tsien, as you want to call him — covers his hair with pomade makes me sick.”

This interchange of opinion increased their liking for one another. A common calumniation of tliird parties is usuaUy. meant as a mutual compliment between two speakers, and is the basis of all women’s gossip. To reveal that you both dislike the same person is an inexpensive way of showing that you like one another. Malin was much too tactfiil to mention Kaiiun. She had

come to like Poya sincerely, for his bearing and his firm and cleat opinions, and her admiration had increased when she heard him at the piano, where to her surprise he played many pieces without music. And Poya was fesdnated by Malin. She was one of those small feminine creatures who seem to profit entirely from thdr smallness. Smallness was suggestive of service; standing by the side of a tall man it suggested sweet devotion, which the tall man liketh it was further associated with quickness of mind and body and in the case of Malin, her bright eyes and ready sniilc.«i and a certain prankishness indicated intelligence. She was one of those fragile, delicate creatures with intelligent eyes that one frequentb sees in Kiangsu and Chekiang in the South. '

r shaded walk, scented with the autumn cypross, the?

followed a small path to the east, overgrown with grass. Arrivine at thc Mte,Poyapwhedit open and let Malin into the stone yard which looked as if it had been deserted for centuries.

The Chungmintang was formerly the banquet hall of the ManAu pnnee who had built this garden, bought by Poya’!

r^idences in otha parts of the city. The doors, now a dry hscoWd pink &om exposure and age, were closed, revealing through lattices in the upper panels only darkness within.

+ 1 , long and opened

the lock. While he was pushing the heavy doors open on tbS

^ Malm%tumbfc7 o«t

high threshold. Every part of this architecture seemed to haw

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been built for a race of giants. Poya rushed forward to catch h‘‘n

“Are you hurt?”

“No, thank you.” Malin smiled up at bim,

Poya’s heart beat fester, for they were now for the first rime alone in that dark hall. There was a smell of tiles and plaster gnd old wood, and a heavy coating of dust lay over the furniture. Malin stepped softly on the floor paved with thick grey tiles a foot and a half square, and almost felt a sense of awe. A heavy table twen^ feet long stood near the back in the centre of the ball, with a cloisonne incense tripod two and a half feet bigb and a pair of inlaid pewter candlesticks, with half burnt red candles, fully two inches thick. Against the back wall stood the wooden anrpsM^jl

tablets, bearing Ae names of the ancestors in raised gilt rbarartfrg against a green background. On the wall, thirty feet high, hung a portrait of Poya’s grandfether, an old man with white bushy eyebrows and pouches under the sharp, brilliant eyes, and a long white beard. This portrait hung above two other enlarged photographs of Poya’s parents, Tijen and Silverscreen. A scroll with die picture of a young lady hung at the side. Struck by the eyes of the old man in the portrait, Mdin esdaimed: "Is that your grandfether?”

“Yes,” replied Poya with great pride. “The neighbours used to call him 'Laosietgen, Old Fairy-Man. He was a great man. He disappeared when I was a child and went on a pilgrimage. If you look beneath his long beard, you’ll see that he was weariug a monk’s dress. He told the family not to search for him, but that he would return in ten years. And he did. When I was twenty, and we were observing the twentieth anniversary of my mother’s death, he suddenly returned, dressed as a monk. Imagme our surprise and our happinessl There was something in him that we could not understand — at least I couldn’t until I grew older. He was kind to me and yet distant. You know what you don’t understand keeps you awake at night. He was a giant.”

Malin listened in wonder. Then she saw the scroll and walked hurriedly to it.

“This is Redjadel” she exclaimed. The light was still dim in the high-ceilinged hall, and the scroll portrait was done in water colour

and fine lines. Stepping up vjsry close to it, Malin saw a girl, dressed in ancient Ming costume with a high Ming coifoe, standing on a bridge with red balustrades and looking down at

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some red and black goldfish swimming in a pond full of lot® flowers. Above her was a weeping willow, while the background was a white blank with a suggestion of mist, wdth two or light splashes of ink indicating distant hilltops. Tlic girl Iiad as oval face, with slightly knitted brows, looking with bent head ati thin rolled volume in one of her hands, wliilc the other liand was raised to touch her hair. MaUn stood and looked at it for a long time. Consciously, or unconsciously she leaned back toward Poya and said; “How beautiful she isl Wliy did they paint a scroll portrait of her, instead of using an enlarged photograph?”

"She was a great reader of Ming roniancc.s,” said Poj'a. “1 remember that Aunt Coral told me that she used to read iii beds great deal, when she was ill. When she died, my aunts Mulan, Mochow, and Coral and Afei himself, all agreed that a true Chinese scroll would be more appropriate. So we asked aa artist to paint it with that ancient costume and background.”

"She was Tan’s sister,” said Malin.

*‘Yes, it is unbelievable. She was older by just about ten years. What a difierence between her and her brothers!”

*‘You admire her greatly, don’t you?”

‘1 do. She committed suicide for romance, I imagine she was very clever,”

"You are a romantic family. That is why Redjadc fascinates me. But why didn’t she and Afci marry? It was love between cousins, wasn’t it?” Malin had a straight, cliildish way of pluag. ing into the family history.

“There w^s a misunderstanding. Paoifan, now my aunt, caioe between them. But it wasn’t all that. I was young when it happened. I was only nine when I heard of her suicide and it frightened me. Since then I have been trying to figure it out fiit myself. My family is full of puzzles for me. Aunt G>ral told me bits of their romance, but as I grew up, I thought out things fist I suspect that my gtandfather disapproved, 1 always have a feeling that my grandfather was a kind of spirit controlling evemhmg in the house without doing a thing. He just lived ho* in this court and meditated and let things happen in their own way. W^n’t that strange?”

“Why is there no portrait of your grandmother?”

Poya s espression changed. “Why are you so interested in tny

&mily history?” ^

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“I don’t know. It is so fascinating to me to have a krge family. I wish I knew half of all your aunts’ and uncles’ stories. ... I love stories . . . especially stories of the elder generations that are dead and gone.^ Our age is changing so fest.” There was a tone of excitement in Malin’s voice.

Poya could not help making a mental comparison between Malin and Kaioan, who lived so much in the present and was content with it. “I don’t know the full story myself. I was bom too late.” He seemed to relax and forget himself, tbiniring aloud. "You asked me about my grandmother. It was a tragedy for me.”

Malin looked mystified “A tragedy?”

“You see there the picture of my poor mother. She committed suicide, too. I was an orphan; my mother died a few months after I was bom, and my femer died when I was four. Aunt Qjtal brought me up. I don’t think I saw my grandmother’s face more than three times in the ten years before she died — ^the same year that Aunt Redjade died. She must have been a terrible woman. During all my childhood I heard my mother spoken of as a

ghost.”

“Lola never told me that,” said Malin, still more excited.

Poya’s face had grown very serious. “Why should she? It all happened so long ago. She didn’t know anything about it, and I doubt whether Tan knows. ... I doubt whether I know. . . . Aunt Coral told me only bits of it, when I grew older and asked her about my mother. . . . You see, my mother was a personal maid serving my fether, and they were in love . . . what is wrong with that? When my grandfather was away, either my grandmother drove her away, or she disappeared, whichever it was doesn’t matter. . . . Ihen I came, and my grandmother forcibly kidnapped me and brought me into this home, while refusing my mother entrance into the house. . . . Then my mother hanged herself.” Although this had happened so long ago, there were still tmces of deep feeling as Poya spoke of his mo&er. "Then the old fool became aftaid of my momer’s ghost. She was aftaid of the dark and someone had to keep her company every night. It was said that my mother had cursed this house and threatened that her ghost would pursue my grandmother to the end of her days. One day she went to a sorceress and thought she had talked with my mother’s ghost. Thereafter she lost her power of speech, and was aftaid of the dark. I was forbidden to come

anywhere within her sight, for her fear and hatred of my mother had extended to me, as if I were a ghost, too. Imagine what that did to my childhood . . . ! But the old woman paid dearly f(.)r her persecution of my mother. One day— it was soon before her and Redjade's funeral preparations were going on and Aunt C o ral was busy in grandmother's room — I was left all alone and felt lonely and went to look for Aunt G)ral. Grandmother caught sight of me and screamed: 'Poya has come to claim my soul. Take him away!' I never felt so terribly in all my childhood as at that moment. How I hated her! Well, she recovered her speech, due to that fidght I gave her, and then she died. . . . How glad I was when she diedl Only after that, in my ninth year, did I have a normal life. I swore I would not worship my grand-mother's spirit, and I haven't. And I swore I would restore my mother's place among the ancestors and hang her portrait high above the others. . . . There she is."

Poya spoke with controlled emotion, and Malin seemed to have caught entirely the spirit of his story and his deep reverence for his parents. She looked up at the portrait of Silvcrscrecn, a woman with big eyes and wide, rather sensuous lips, in a satin dress with a high collar. Poya stood squarely before the portraits and bowed three times, and h^in instinctively foUowod. Wliilc she did so, she noticed the great resemblance between Poya and his father. The portrait of ms father, Tijen, was that of a young man with a handsome, ambitious face, and a high, straight nose. The resemblance was striking, except that the father wore a small

moustache. Tijen in the portrait was also in foreign dress, and if Poya had worn a moustadhe, the likeness would have been almost complete.

“Wasn’t your fether handsomcl” said Malin. “He looks so much like you.”

Poya looked down at her and said with a smile: “Thank you. He must have been a noble and brave young man.”

“How did he die?”

“He died by felling ftora horseback.”

“He was romantic, wasn’t he?”

“Yes, I suppose he was. Aunt G>ral didn’t tell me cvcrytliing. It must have been a great love affair between my father and mother.”

Malin was strangely moved. As they went outside, she stood on

the porch, think i n g, bil^ her nail, while Poya carefully locked the door. There was agitation on her fece.

‘^ell, now you know my family history, all locked in there.”

The air outside and the clear autumn sun made them breathe the atmosphere of the present world again.

“Did you like the portrait of Redjade?” he asked as they came down the marble steps.

“Oh, yes,” answered Malin with her usual smile. *T was thinking of your father and your mother . .

‘T am sorry to ha^e troubled you with my story. Let’s change the subject and sit down here,” said Poya.

He took a handkerchief fi:om his pocket and spread it on the raised flower-bed of plaster.

“TeU me why you bite your nails.”

Malin smiled. “Oh, I don’t know. I just always do.”

“Does it help you think?”

“Perhaps it does. It’s just a habit of mine.”

“What are you thioking about?”

“Of your family. You have such a family, such beaudful aimts, such a garden. . . . Romance . . . suicide . . . just as it should be in sudi a big, old family.” Malm’s eyes were wet, which Poya did not understand until much later.

“Times have changed,” said Poya with a sigh. “I am the eldest grandson. This garden is practically deserted now. My uncles and aunts have all gone to the South. ... 1 shall be going south, too. . . . There is the war. What will happen to this garden?”

Mftlin seemed wrapped in thought. Hec presence put Poya in a mood to talk of ihmgs that he would not talk about -in the presence, of his wife, or of Lola. Malin seemed to understand. “Those days of peace will never come back. *A beautiful morning, a pretty spot and a day to while away,’ ” he said, quoting the Sisiang.

Poindng to the flower-bed with its unmred-for peonies, Malin said: *Tt seems as if we were ‘a group of white-haired palace maids, dhatting about the good, old days of Hsuanchung.’ ” This was a quotation from me poet Yuan Chen, and Poya was surprised, al&ough the line was well known.

“Well, you quote Yuan, and I quote Tunp;,” said Poya. The autunon sun fell upon the b^utiful hair of Malin. They were alone

in the stone court-yard. He could not brush away the thought of Malin’s hidden mystery, yet, sitting here, her youth and freshness were real and reassuring. Almost unconsciously, he repeated: “ "The rivers and hills of the old country remain; it is late spring and the vegetation is deep green.’ . . . The older generation is gone. ... are the younger generation.” Poya accidentally used the word "we,” which, in his manner of speaking, seemed to include Mdin. She looked up. It was like the opening i-'f a scene of love.

“Why *we’?” she asked gaily.

Poya held himself back a little. He did not want to spoil the moment. Yet he said: “We are young, as my aunts and uncles were once young. Don’t you believe there were love and romance in this very garden a hundred years ago among the Manchtt princes and princesses? Time makes no difference . . Malin listened quietly and he went on. “Each generation has its o'Wi story, its love and its romance and its quarrels. . . . Only the garden, the trees and the birds do not change. . . , .Malin, t!^ garden is made for love. . . . Don’t you think . . . ? VC'Iiy ate we two here?”

He stopped and looked deeply into hhilin’s eyes, and put his atm airdmcl her small sHouIcKfs. Her body was shaking.

'"""“WEat about your wife?” she asked, ever so sofll v.

"Why talk of her?”

"She is your wife.”

- “I have never cared for her.” Sitting beside her, he bent dbse to her fece and smelled the fragrance of her cheeks, and she permitted him. It was strange, yet the law of nature, that woman should play the part of the seducer by acting as the seduced. Whether Malin dhccked herself out of modesty or out of a feminine instinct, her small frame did not respond with gestures or movements while he bent above her, but sat still, petfeedy happy, in a way which said she wanted to be loved.

"Tell me about yourself,” whispered Poya.

“I haven’t a feroily like yours. It is interesting to nobody but myself.”

"You are wonderful. Perhaps your femily is not so interesting, but I am mterested in you. Tell me something.”

“There is really nothing to teli,” replied Malin. She looked carefully into Poya’s &ce. "Yon are not ofiended, ate you?”

"Oh, no. I am glad to know you as you are.”

“Shall we go?” she said, rising ftom her seat.

Poya led her out of the yard, and shut the gate behind them.
He escorted her back to her court and returned to his rooms.

CHAPTER m

Kainan was sitting at her dresser, curling her hair, at half-past two in the afternoon. Somehow she was angry with her hair.
The trouble was that she had a long ftce and broad features, with dear, black eyebrows and big eyes. She had worn her hair short, brushing it straight back, hfaiin wore hers in long curls down to die shomders, and, set against Malin*s small, round ftce, this was efiective. Kaioan tried to spread her hair behind her head but it seemed only to emphasiae the size of her fece. If Poya had cared to advise and had taught her to arrange it with just a few well-set curls behind her ears, it would have been suitable. But Poya didn’t care, and she, not being initiated into the niceties of feminine contour like Lola and Malin, did not know what to do.
She stood up before the full-length mirror and seemed taller than ever.

Poya returned, still thinTring of Malin and wondering what to make of her. He had a curious feeling of guilt toward his wife, which he did not have when he was returning ftom a visit to the Pata Hutung district of women, a feeling that was strange to him. He had done nothing more guilty than to show Malin the ancestral hall and to flirt mildly with hft; yet in his thoughts he had made love to her, and it was as if he had actually made love. His infetuation with Malin surprised himself.

“You have returned,” remarked Kainan, with an implication of glad stirprise.

“Yes, Malin wanted to see the portrait of Redjadc. She was quite impressed.”

Kainan threw her comb down and went toward a (hair, taking up a magazine in order not to read it. *T)o you think she is really so much interested in our femily? She is neither internal nor external relative.”

§9

"How do I know? I think Aunt Lola told her of Redjadc’s romance, and she wanted to see for herself.”

"Who is she, anyway?”

“I don’t know. She is Lola’s guest. All I know is her name and surname.”

"How long is she going to stay here?”

“I don’t know. She has been waiting to go to Shanghai. She may come with us.”

Kainan looked up at Poya. “Do you think she is as helpless as all that? A girl who has no family usually can look out for herself.”

"How do you know she has no family?”

"Whether she has a femily or not is none of my business,” said Kainan with some suppressed emotion. "But there’s a limit to one’s hospitality. We are going south, and after we ate gone, she can stay in this garden widi Lola as long as she likes. But 1 will not travel in the same company with that woman.”

Poya flared up. "You won’t? WeU, I will.”

Poya was a stern husband. Kainan would not easily submit to another person, but Poya had treated her cheaply and she seemed powerless against him. She wished he would strike her, so that she could accuse him, but he maintained an imperturbable

coolness which was more exasperating.

Kainan rose and left the room with evident disgust. Po>’a had returned intending to be kind, because he felt guilty himself and b^eved he might soon be ftee. But Kainan’s words had irritated him, md he had spoken with his curt and superior ait.

Kainan was in the mood of a yoimg wife who, after three or four years of marriage, discovers that her marriage has foiled. Her marriage with Poya had bem accepted as a great triumph among her girl friends at the Peking National University, where Poya and she had studied. Po;p had not distinguished himself in his class work. He had studied for the first two years at Tsinghwa Umversity, in the western suburbs, then changed his mind and finished at Peking National University, or Pcita, as it was
The students of Peita were comparatively poor and generally older, as some of than had already been teachers or principals of schools in the country, had married and had children. As the grandson of the owna of the Prince’s Garden, young and handsome, with an easy confident bearing, Poya stood out among

the students and was considefed a prize by the girls. Kainan had been on the basketball team, and her fine physique had attracted Poya. They had married after a brief romance, in their last

semester. Poya was drawn to her for several reasons: First, because at this period his ideal was that of a tall, healthy woman, he himself being tall; second, because Kainan, not at all brilliant in her class work, was gay and sociable and took part in many activities; thirdly, because her name 'TCainan" meant "topping the nmle sex," containing a feminist challenge, and this had appealed to Poya. He wanted a wife who could work shoulder to shoulder with him; it was part of his youthful idealism, and, coming at the right psycholo^cal moment, Kainan embodied that ideal for him. Finally, the chief reason was that Kainan, with her practical instinct, courted Poya as much as he courted her. In this courtship, she was firee and uninhibited, which he took to be a sign of her true modernity. And so he proposed to her and she accepted him over several other suitors. It was an easy decision, her girl friends sayitig that she had "struck a gold-mine." At this time, Poya's grand&ther. Old Yao, was still living, and when Poya asked him, he had said: 'T approve. She is a strong, hedthy girl. Big hips mean many dhildren — strong, healthy children. Our race must be strong. You see the Western countries, how strong and healthy and firee their women arel"

In spite of Old Yao's predictions, there were no children. In a few months, both husband and wife discovered that the other was strong-tempered, and as usual the woman yielded more than the man. After his Aimt G>ral died, Poya fell a victim of Japanese heroin and became very thin. Kainan took good care of him, and for a short period Poya was again tender toward his wife. Almost invisibly, he cooled again when he vas well. Kainan could not

understand why he was dissatisfied. She tried to pay mote attention to her dress, and Poya seemed still more remote. He went oS with his friends, of whom he had many, and he drank and fell in love with a well-known actress, Oyun. K ai n a n put this down as the natural way of a rich man’s son. Usually when he came back, he smelled of drink. An expert at cards, m^jong, and the finger-guessing game, he had more romantic adventures than he cared to tell his wife. He visited the district of women in the company of old scholars, and when he was honoe, he did not talk much, but rdad art, poetry, and collected works from his gtand-

fethei's library, into the small hours of the morning. In his spate hours he immersed himself in Ku Yenwu’s masterpiece on historical geography {Tienhsh Chunkm UpingSbu) in 1 20 vulumes. This was due to die influence of the head of the Peking Geological Surrey, with which he was connected for two years after his graduation. The head was an English-educated geologist and a brilliant scholar, and had curiously made tlic weapons of modem warcraft his hobby. Under his influence, Poya developed into a “strategist,” as he called himself, and made a study of historical campaigns, but, being in easy circumstances, never had to publish his writings in magazines. Being versatile, he also played the piano and learned many pieces by heart.

Kainan had setded down to the life of the society matron, compensating for the loss of her husband's affections by parties of her own, and went on enjoying the wealth which her marriage into the rich Yao family had given her. It was about this period that Poya became cruelly cynical and said many harsh wt frds to her: "You and your confounded jewels and your snobbish friendsl What about your feminism and your women's riglitsi Topping the male sexl"' But Kainan had reached tlie point where she did not care much about his taunts, and went on smiling among her rich women friends. Conscious of her position, she had given up sports for manicuring, and was much interested in whitening her complexion and softening her skin, in which she succeed^.
Only recently, since the fall of Peking, had she begun to feel the loneliness and boredom of confinement. There were no more parties and most of her friends had left the city. Tlxeit cat had been taken away by the "authorities," as Granduncle Feng railed them; T^s was why she had been asking Poya to take her to Shanghai.

ButPoya couH well understand why he was dissatisfied with his wife. He discovered that, for once, his sage grandfatlier Ixad been wrong. Not only did Kainan produce no dmdren, but Iiis whole theory of the desirability of marrying a woman with a strong physique rm shattered. He discovered that a girl athlete who had attracted him on the college playground did not make a good wife and rompanion. She was not even a good cook or housekeeper, since her college edumtion did npt provide for that. Poya xm punctUbus about his personal appearance and his stud^, but

Kainan was untidy and threw her things about; she showed not

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the slightest feelitig for the antiques and art treasures for which he had great affection. When he began to know other women of the Pata Hutung district with their soft, quiet, and cultivated charm, he began to change his feminine ideal. Kainan's muscular body now repelled him. He now believed that sport was bad for women, because it took away ftom them something feminine, both physically and mentally. It hardened the woman's muscles, coarsened her voice, and, it seemed to him; blunted all her nerve-endings and stultified her mind. The mind and the body seemed to be shaped together, and a delicate mind could not dwell in an indelicate body. It was a belief based upon his personal ex-periences with women of the demi-monde in the Pata Hutung district, where well-established rules of hospitality and courtship made refinement and delicacy the first rules. In his revulsion against his wife, he began to hate all tall women and to like small, delicate creatures.

The Pata Hutung district often made it unnecessary for husband and wife to quarrel, but it also made it unnecessary for them to patch up. Poya did not condone his visits there or excuse himself. He merely accepted the feet that he and his wife were riot made for one another. His finer nature and his culture made him

demand an ideal woman and a union of body and soul. It was for him an instinctive quest. He was not of the order of good husbands ■willing to accept the second-rate and tolerate and be 1rin<i to a woman simply because he had already married her. But his outside af&irs necessarily contaminated the pure spring of matrimntiial love, since they used up his love for woman — ^the reserve store of energy whidi constantly nourishes a happy marriage. _ _ . ^

With this (hange in his ideal of the feminine came a change in his wife’s character. As Kainan accepted the new arrangemmt, being unwilling to risk a divorce, Poya saw also a transformation of her character, which gave the lie to her college education. In foe 'first year of foeir marriage she had pretended to foUow some of his discussions of books and politics. Now she gave up all reading excqjt some pictorial and movie magazines, and was ftankly and unashamedly herself well satisfied ■with her social positionandher jewellery and foe chance to show off her garden to her guests, '^en Poya thought of her feminist name, he laughed and his dislike foanged to contempt. Being too balanced a man to

use violence, he kept to a normally cynical ccwlness, which came out in his remarks and which was even more irritating.

In his restlessness, he found also another retreat. The influena of Peita was stamped indelibly upon him and had much to do with his mental development. He had studied Qiinese literature undet one of the best professors. Peita still had some of the nationally known scholars on its faculty and one of the best of libraries. But it was the broad indefinable atmosphere of liberalism and academic freedom which allowed his mind to grow and follow its own bent. The students lived some in dormitories and some in public hostels and led a life that was rich and varied and free. There were many organizations, partly literary and pardy political, and many publications in which both students and professors published their writings. These discussions in the magazines were sometimes carried over into the classroom. In the years before the wax, when Peiping was living under the shadow of constantly creeping Japanese encroachments and the Ohahar-Hopei Political Council was established as a semi-autonomous regime to ward off direct conflict between Japan and the Central Government, national politics naturally occupied the foreground of the students' minds. Poya loved to go at night to the Mashenmiao compound east of the Coal Hill to hear heated discussions of politics; there were both conservatives dnd hot-heads, those who favoured immediate war and those who welcomed the policy of playing for time, some who doubted t^t Chiang Kaishek was preparing for war and some who were ronvinced that Chiang was the only leader who could steer China through these difficult times. There was the still larger issue between the Kuomintang and the Communists, and among the Kuomintang supporters again the issue was between those who

believed in a democratic decentralization and those who believed in strong centralization. The latter were labelled by the left as “ftscists.” It was in those heated discussions with rightist and leftist students before the war, that the ‘*scorched-earth policy*’ was carefully examined and weighed and Poya’s own war strategy first took shape.

Po3^ did not join any party, but he conceived an intense admiration for Chiang Kaishek which, as the war developed, grew into an idolizing worship. His zaalytical powers made him see many things years ahead and ignore details that occupied the

sfflallet tninds. He gathered all the infomiation about Qhiang Kaishek, observed, studied, aud analysed him. He followed Chiang’s achievements ftom the period of dvil wars, in which he broke up, outmanoeuvred, and outfought the well-entrenched mili ta r is ts, to the period of national unification and reconstraction, and down to this war against foreign aggression. And he began to see the influence of old culture and classical tradition upon Chiang. Poya’s was essentially an analytical and historical mind, and he was fascinated, as tnany historians are, by a great hero dominating a whole period of development. So he read every-thing that Chiang ever published, and the more he studied this contemporary history in the making, the greater the stature of

rhiang grew in his mind. He never joined the Kuomintang, having a dislike for action — or rather, having no necessity for action because of his family circumstances — ^but he held his mind like a mirror, reflecting the growing stature and the movements of his hero. And as it was also an artistic mind, he coloured his observations with interpretative comment, and he had a vision of Chiang ^whom he had never seen) whidh grew in beauty and solidity, almost as the clay bust grows in power and beauty under the fingers of a great sculptor.

Thus between love and politics, Poya found much to occupy his time, totally apart from his wife. His restless mind oscillated between sensti^sm with women and a cold, purely iotellectual interest in politics, and the two seemed to complement one another. He loved order and he had seen happy marriages in h^ home, that of his uncle Afei with Paofen, and those of his aunte Mulan and Mochow, and these impressions remained always in the back of his mind. His infetuation with Malin see^d tp him extraordinary, and he wondered what it would be like to be in love with one’s own wife.

This afternoon’s meeting with Malin had made him happier. He knew he was selfish to be seriously thi nk i n g of deserting his wife, but his cynicism made him believe that selfishness was the teal motivating force of all htunan actions.

That night he went over to see Malin as he had promised and was amused to see her being quite firiendly with Tsien. His pride

prevented him from feeling jealous, because she had told hm her opinion of Tsien and because she stole glances at him while she was talking. While sitting close to them at the mahjong tables

iMalin did not indulge in cheap flirtation. Poya touched Maliu's ifeet, but she did not respond. But she had a way of drooping her to look at her pieces, and slowly lifting and lowering her {eyelashes in quiet observation of all that was going on around her. {When the company was laughing, she laughed as if to cover up a thought. Sometimes there were intervals of dead silence, rat to Poya every movement and every silence seemed to indicate i scaet understanding which they shared between themselves.

The Chungmintang visit and Malin's conversation had ascinated Poya. He had decided to make love to her. The following afternoon, Poya went again to Malin and asked her to go out for a walk, and asked Lola, too, to go with them, since it would be improper not to ask her. She consented and they went out through the moon door on the west and reached the rockery leading to the peadh orchard. The autumn air was getting chill and the peach trees were already shedding their leaves. Malin said she felt cold and that she had better go back and get a sweater.

*T11 go and get it for you," said Lola with a smile. "You wait

here for me," she said to Poya and Malin with a happy look.

Malin and Poya remained. When Poya looked at her, she turned her head aside as if embarrassed. She liad put on Chinese silk slippers with low heels. She stood silent, while Poya walked about in inward agitation, his foreign shoes making the only noise on tide pebble wa^. Soon a maidservant appeared with a sweater .for Malin and said the mistress had some needlework to do and a§ked them to go alone.

'Tlow is this?" said Malin, quite embarrassed. "Shall we go in?"

"T^ the mistress we shall soon be back," said Poya to the maid. He turned to Malin and helped her put the sweater on; it was a de^ brown with big stitches and came down only to the upper waist. Malin buttoned the lower end, shaking her curb against Ae soft wind. Hb look made her self-conscious. The tension increased the slight distortion in her eyes, yet it did not seem inharmonious and only added an exotic chamii to her fa re , as the slight south^ accent added charm to her voice. The brown sweater, so simple in colour, enhanced the bwiuty of her figure by emphasizing her small waist.

"Well?" said Poya, since he had nothing better to say, and turned and escorted her through the garden. He had wanted this

chance to talk with her alone, and he was snte that Lola had left them on purpose.

“Poya,” said Malin, "this is strange, my meeting you here through this war. . . . My only regret is that we meet too late.” This was a polite phrase for new friends, yet, under the circumstances, it might not have been said, and tdierefore had a special meaning.

"Yes, it’s too bad we didn’t know each olher earlier. Perhaps it’s not too late.” Her eyes met his.

They had feUen into an easy pace. Malin, out of embarrassment, began to pluck the leaves and flowers along the path.

"\^y do you destroy flowers and leaves like that? It shortens one’s life.”

"I just like to. Does it really shorten one’s life?” Malin asked playfully.

“No, it is just an idea. Break all the branches you want, as far as I care.”

There was a giant magnolia in bloom a few paces away, and Malin on a playful impulse went forward and broke oS three or four small branches, one after another, laughing aloud as she

heard the wood snap. Poya joined in her laughter.

"Therel” she sai^ presenting the ttiagnol^ to him. “By how many years has this shortened my life?”

^TDon’t say that-r-I was only joking.” Quodng a line, he said: “ Tlowcrs should be plucked while they ate good for plucking; wait not to pluck the bare branch when the flowers ate gone.’ ” *

This reference to youth and love was at once understood by Malin, and she pouted her lips. "What shall I do with these?” she said.

'TU hold them for you.”

‘T suppose I am really wrong,” said Malin remorsefully, hn&ce suddenly dianging. "I shouldn’t do this. . . . Nobody has taught me not to. . . . Everything a woman does is wrong,” she said sadly

She passed quickly ftom playful to serious mood.

“Why do you say that?” asked Poya, puzzled.

"Don’t you think it is tme — ^that everything a girl does is always wrong?”

"Why?”

“My meeting you here, for example. I suppose it is wrong.

People always blame the girl.”

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“I don’t believe it,” Poya denied hotly.

“You’ve never been a girl.”

The momentary injured expression passed and she became vivacious again. They went on past the paved court-yard into the Dimfiagtance Studio, fedng the pond, then following the at closed corridor they came to a coveted passage. Poya pointed out that here the caiud turned south and that they were in fact standing upon a covered bridge across the water. Malin stamped her feet on the wooden planks and laughed at the creaky noise, and, l<»flning over to look at the water, put out her tongue- Her childish gaiety and waggish smile amus^ Poya greatly. Her eyes were hfigTitftfj her smile heartier, her voice richer and fuller than usual Poya seen her happy and had seen her face veiled with a passing sadness, but he had never seen her so completely gay with unspoiled fun.

men they came out of the covered bridge, Malin ran ligihtly up the steps of the little mound. Poya followed and saw her panting

slowly, looking back at him with a gay challenge in her eyes. Coming up, he seiaed her hands and said: ‘Tve caught you.”

“But I wasn’t running away. You were not chasing me, were you?”

“Yes ...”

Before he could finish his sentence, she slipped her hands from his grip and ran down the northern side of the mound. The stone steps were narrow and winding with many turns, and in a moment she was out of sight. Poya came down mote slowly to a point where a path branched o£F, leading into a grotto. He paused, listened, and went on down the steps. He had reached the lower ground when all' of a sudden MaUn burst out laughing bdiind him, lEcom the end of the dark passage. Poya tumra and she quickly disappeared. The passage in the cave was but ten or twelve f(»t long, and Poya retraced Ms steps to intercept her at the other end. As he came near to it, he suddenly saw her dash out with a cry and up the steps. She stumbled and one of her slippers came off, but she stUl ran on. - Poya picked up her silk slippet and holding the trophy in his hand, approached Mr like a victor.

She was standing on one foot, half leaning on a rock.

“Now what’s the forfeit?” said Poya.

“Please,” begged hfclin, "give me my slipperl”

“Only on my condition.”

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“What is it?”

“Give me your foot, and I’ll put it on for you.”

“There!” said Malin as she put out her foot, slim and rhythmic-ally full. Poya knelt doum to hold her foot. As he was putting it on, there was the sound of someone passing. “Hush!” said Malin and crouched down. “If someone should see us,” she whispered. With a mischievous smile, she slouched down, her back sliding against the rock. In that curious position, they stayed quiet until they heard the footsteps pass beyond the mound. There was an expression of chUdish fear and wholesome fiin on Malin’s small face. When the footsteps died out, Poya said: “Sit on the ground. It is quite clean. Why are you so imppy to-day?”

Ihe afternoon sun shone full on her fece, as she rested her head on a rock behind her. T have never been so happy in my life,” she said.

‘T am glad.”

“Love, laugh, and live. It isn’t often in life that one can be truly happy.”

A moment ago, Poya had been completely charmed by Malin’s great mirth. Now in a fraction of a second, her &ce had changed to a languid expression which belied her frivolity.

“Malin, will you be very good to me? I have never yet met a girl like you. There is something in you that I don’t understand. Why did you say that everything a girl does is always wrong?”

“Isn’t it?”

“I don’t know. What made you say that?”

“My experience,” replied Malin slowly.

“What experience?”

Her heavy lashes lifted, and her eyes met Poya’s look with a . direct challenge. Then she slowly bwered her eyes and ■vm quiet. The pale afternoon sun upon her ftagile fece made her look ttesh and tender.

“Malin, tell me about yourself. I want to know you better.”

“About myself?”

“Who ate you? "Where are your parents?”

“Well, I am Malin and my surname is Tsui.”

“I know that. I mean something about your self.”

“There is nothing to tell. I am just a common gitl.”

“Don’t be so mysterious. Who are your parents?”

“I have no parents.”

"How did you know Lola? Was she your schoolmate.''”

“No, I never went to school, except for a short time.”

“You won’t tell me and Lola wouldn’t tell me. I have told you aU about my femily, or nearly all, and you won’t tell me about yours.”

"Does it matter very much to you who I am?”.

'*Yes, it does . . . very much. Malin, may we be good friends — ^true friends?”

Malin sat with her head turned toward the flowering shrub and her fingers pulling at the dry leaves, one by one. Then as Poya continued to wait for an answer, she tossed her curls back and seemed occup ied in adjusting her Eiif, the action reve aling the fmriine pf bet hr ^^s more cieatJLy th an belore. ’l^hc~c liiirmlng ' gesture only inerted Poya’s desire to~Ea6w this woman’s myst^. Except for the occasional twittering of birds, the pl^z-e was silent. There was a flush on her free and a look of confusion and embarrassment. She looked up at him quickly and '^eU, what?” snuling the smile of a woman ready to be loved.' “What is there about me that you want to know?”

^ must know you better. You had parents. You didn’t drop out of the sky like a fairy maiden, did you?”

Mjalin snapped a dry branch. She spoke with a slight tremble in her voice and a look of hesitation on her face as if she were yielding up a se<xet. "Well, my father was a militarist. ... I cannot tell you his name. . . . Tsui is my mother’s name.”

" "Ate you telling a fairy tale?”

‘|Take it as you like. My fether cast my mother off and we grew up in poverty. My mother died when I was seventeen . . .” She

stopped abruptly.

%ell,goon.”

"About this time, my father was assassinated.”

“Assassinated! By whom?”

"I c^’t tell you that. You would know too much. Many

people hated him. He had killed so many.”

“You seem to have no feeling for your father.”

“None whatsoever. Whyshoiddl? . . . Is that enough?”

"No,teUmemore.” ®

I left alone, and someone fell in love with me. . . .

Oh, it was fentastic, what I went through. You wouldn’t believe

'T belieye that a ptetty young giil like you left alone in the

world would run into adventures.”

"Poya bmng, would you think that I had gone through any sufferings?”

^*1 wouldn’t, to look at you. How old are you?”

'*1 am twenty-five.” hfttlin stopped to gaze at him closely and then said: if I told you I was married?”

Poya paused a moment before he said: “That makes you the more charming. I am not surprised that somebody wanted to marry you.”

“He offered to put me through school, and he came constantly to see me, until I was espelled. Does that amuse you?”

“Goon. Then what?”

"Then it was belli His fether came between us. I married him without his father’s consent. We were happy at first — ^for a few months. ... He was the son of a compradore of a steamship company, and his father found out who I was. He hated my father because he said my father had put him in jail and he had saved hims elf only by pa 3 dng a hundred thousand dollars. He wanted revenge and took it out on me. But what was I to do? What could a young girl alone in this world do? The old man never relented. I was a fool, that was all.”

“Was it he who assassinated your fether?”

“No, it was someone else. My fether had made many enemies.”

“Was the murderer ever tried in court?”

“No. Public opinion was for him. You don’t believe that my fether worked widi the Japs, do you?”

“But you’ve not told me who your fether is.”

"Yes, I suppose I am crazy. . . . So fet as that goes it didn’t matter to me. It was so complicated. I never cared for my feifeM. My mother hated him. But my old fether-in-law would fling it in my fece and call me 'seed of a traitor.’ Was I to defend my fether or not? He first was angry with his son, because he hated me. Then he changed his mind, and threatened to cut his son off unless he moved me iu, and there I was, shut up for weeks iu husband’s home. I am sure his object was to make me commit suicide. I could not see my husband and I cried myself to sleep . . . until his mother took pity on me and said to the old man: If her father was wrong, he is dead anyway now. '^y blame it on his daughter? If you don’t like Lien-erh, the proper way

would be to send bet away and ask our son to marry another

one . .

“Lien-erh?”

"Oh, that was my name. I changed it afterwards.”

'The old woman was good-hearted.”

“Yes, she was a Buddhist. She said to her husband: 'Good deeds, good reward; bad deeds, bad retribution. It’s better to commit less such secret sins — ^the gods know about it.’ ”

“Then what?”

“Well, his father encouraged him to get another wife, and he did. Where was I? — neither cow nor horse, neither wife not concubine. . . . And this new woman was very jealous. I had lost respect for my husband by that time and I didn’t cate. But Heaven never leaves a person without an escape. So one day, my mother-in-law came into my room at dusk and handed me a paper package, and said: ‘Lien-erh, since you came into our house I’ve never had a moment’s peace of heart. But men’s hearts are wicked. They would not listen to me. Take this, there ate six hundred dolte in it, and find yourself something to do. Leave the city and go somewhere else. I’ll settle it with them, father and son, and see that they don’t bother you . . .”

Malin’s voice stopped here. Then she said very slowly while

twisting her handkerchief: “There are people of good heart in this world. If it were not for that old lady, I might have died."
An e:q)ression of calm had come ov6t her youthful face, all traces of su^ing had vanished.

Poya looked and marvelled. “To look at you, one would never tiiink you have gone throiigh so much. What did you do then?”

“IVe told you enough. Don’t ask me more.”

Poya moved closer and took her hand and she responded with a pressure which set his nerves tingling .

“Don’t tell anybody,” hlalin said.

Poya moved still closer and their hands remained locked.
Malm vras very silent. Then Poya played with her hair and still she did not speak, her eyes looking down on the ground and her chest gently having. He clasped her face with both his hands and held it up to Mm, and saw her eyes fill with a wild passion.

“MaM, this is our love,” he said.

He kissed her, and she responded with a hot and passionate kiss.
He felt the warmth of her arms around him.

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have always wanted love,” he said, "this love. Whethet outside or in marriage is unimportant. Call it a marriage. A marriage where two persons are united, body and soul — ^you know what I mean . . . they seem to melt together and you don’t know which is which. This is it/’

Malin made no motion.

“Won’t you say something?”

'Tam just happy. . . *. I don’t want to say anything.”

'T am happy, too.”

They had thus lain so for two or three minutes, when Poya said: “Lien-erh . . . Lien-erh — like that name.”

"Don’t call me that.”

"Why not?”

"It is my childhood name. . . . Or — ^you can call me that, but only between omselves, when nobody is by. It reminds me of my mother.”

"Y es, Lien-erh.” And they laughed together.

"What shall I call you?” asked MaJin.

"Just call me Poya, my ebunyatou**

"Why call me that?”

"I don’t know. We say that in Peking.” Yatou means slave-girl, and Poya was calling her "my beautiful slave.”

"Ohl” said Malin with a childish nod, which was characteristic of a certain simplicity in her. "Why is the same word , used for abuse and for endearment?” •

"It is like this: if you love one, you can caU her by any name and it would sound sweet.”

"Why do we say cbm^ and not mei^jatouV^

simply means 'beautiful.’ But cbm means ^pretty and intelligent.’ I don’t know why a maid should be pretty and intelligent rather than a wife, but there it is.”

At the word "wife” Malin’s face changed and she was silent.

"What are you thinking about?” asked Poya.

Malin began sadly. "Society always takes the side of the wife.

A woman with intelligence is always wrong. But what can a woman do with her intelligence? Society never blames the man who has one affair after another. Seeking pleasure, they call it. But what about the girl who has affair? Marriage is more serious for a woman than for a man, because her life is affected by it. She is not even seeking pleasure. Suppose she is not happily

matticd— what can she do about it? Is she to temain dumb and put up with it? And if she h^ an afito, what does society say? Suppose somebody should discover us here— who knows whether ' you are making love to me or I making love to you? But people would condemn me and not you, and I would be wrong again.”

Poya’s eyes followed her closely as she gave this rather im- expected opinion, which by no means displeased him.

“Why (hd yon say wrong again? Have you been in the wrons before?” ^ ^

“It has nothing to do with you,” answered Malin. "Even in that marriage, people said it was I who seduced the young son, and not he who seduced me. His own people either taunted me with marrying into the femily of my father’s enemy — ^which ^ras ‘shameless’ — or else, as his fether said, I was the seed of a rrgitnt

The old man used to say that his family owed my family a debt in the previous incarnation. Do you believe that a man’s sins ate visited upon his children?”

“I don’t know. I suppose, because of the blood in us, we all ate STiflfering for what om ancestors did.”

Poya took Malin’s hand and admired the delicate veins and the almost invisible hair on her atm in the afternoon stm.

"I love you dearly, Malin,” declared Poya.

‘ ‘Uen-^h,” corrected Malin happily. “Have you loved other wdinen like this before?”

“No. There was always something wanting. There have been many pretty feces, but after a while, they seemed such bores. Yon know I have a notion that pretty women are naturally stupid, and brilliant women are physically repulsive, too clever, too bony, too uncomfortable. That makes men restless.”

Malin listened gladly to his discourse on women. “Am I ment^y stupid or am I physically repulsive, which?” she said with her gurgling laugh.

“Malin — ^Lien-erh — was talking about other women,” Poya laughed.

‘T don't want compliments. TeU me very plainly, please, very plainly. What is it inme that you like? Jwanttidsto beforevet, to last for ever. I want to do everything to please you. Tell me , what I am, which — stupid or repulsive?”

“I cannot analyse you. You seem so young and ftesh, yet you have gone through so much. You are certainly not repulsive.”

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“Thank you.”

“And you can’t be stupid.”

“Ho\ 7 do you knour?”

know. Do you know what makes a btilliant girl repulsive?”

“What?” said Malin.

“A btilliant gitl talks too much. Her brilliance shines and cuts and makes a man uncomfortable.”

“It must be very difficult to be a gitl to please a man,” said Malm, as if fiightened.

“But there is a perfect woman. Her intelligence at the same time shines and soothes. That is you. You are both exciting and soothing.”

“Oh, Poyal” murmured Malin. **1 must not disillusion you. It makes me a&aid. Are you very difficult to please? I’ll do every-thing to please you. I will be your mistress, tf you want me.”

Lookbg at her full in the face, an object of delight, Poya said: “Do you think there can be a wife and a mistress in one woman?”

“How?”

“A wife is a wife. She holds a marriage certificate over your head. She is protected and she doesn’t cate. She is Mrs. this or Mrs. that. Like Kainan. She is Mrs. Yao socially. That’s all she is interested in. A mistress hasn’t that advantage. She therefore docs her best to please the man. Can you imagine a wife having, loving and being loved, like a mistress? You have heard the , proverb. ‘A wife is not as good as a mistress, a mistress not as , good as stealing, and stealing not as good as stealing frustrated.’

Malin laughed “I shall remember that. Am I stealing you?”

“You know I don’t care for Kainan. She knows it better than you do.”

“Have I really stolen you . . . ? If I have, I am happy. What

are you going to do?”

‘^ou know she has been wanting to go to Shanghai.”

“Can you take me? Will she object?”

“Doesn’t she object to your staying here already? That’s not the point.”

‘^enwhat?”

“She wants to stay with her patents. That’s just as welL
She is miserable and unhappy. I’ve been cold and cruel to her.”

Malin, listening with absorbed attention, was imagiaing herself

Uviog ■with him. "Will you take me •with you? Stealing, mistress wife, all ate the same to me, so long as I have you.”

Poya’s fece was clouded and he did not answer.

“Poya, I am feee and all alone, and I ■will follow you wheteve you go, just to love you.”

"will you? It is the war, you know.”

"I will go wherever you go.”

"Will you truly?” Poya looked at her sharply as if he •was ttyia|
to understand this girl, whose life was still Mf hidden in mysto^
for him. "Tell me everything about yourself.”

"Why must I tell you everything?”

"Because I love you.”

"Fve told you mote than I ever told anybody else.”

There •was also a doud on Mai in’ s face.

"Oh, well. I suppose it is enough. I love you as you ate.”

Malin said, ‘*You told the maid we would be coming in soon.
And now the sun is setting.”

Poya hdped her up. "C^me,” he said.

He escorted her through the orchard to her court, with his atm
around her -waist. Loitering before they crossed the moon door,
he had a strange feeling this had happened too suddenly for bitn[
and yet he knew he had come •with the purpose of malcing love

to her to-day and was flushed with a sense of his easy conquest.

“Are you coming to our court to-night?” asked Malin, now very ralin.

' "I -will, just to look at you. But if we expect to go south together, we must be naturd.”

"It -will be like stealing. Oh, I love the feeling of stealing you, and nobody knowing,” she whispered close to him. '

"Are you going to let Lola know?” asked Poya.

^“No,” said Malin firmly.

"You ate not stupid,” Poya said.

‘T -will tell nobody. It must be an entire secret, our own secret until -we ate in Shanghai.”

Poya felt then and there that he -wanted to "steal” Malin. Yet he was guarded by his knowledge of women. It would be mote cxdting to have "stealing frustrated.” He wanted it so. And he looked forward to a period of enchantment.

CHAPTER IV

The autumn wind was high, and the aii •was crisp and cool. Malin had rolled up the paper in her window as usim last night and early in the morning she woke feeling chilly. She tucked in her bedding and tried to go to sleep again. But the memory of last night’s meeting with Poya, so beautiful and so unexpected, remained and she could not sh^e it from her mind. Her heart fluttered. Gradually her lips curved into a smile, and she drew closer down into her pillow. She heard voices already in the front court, but in her court-yard all was still. She knew or felt that something important, something very happy and perhaps foolish, had happened.

Why had she allowed Poya to make love to her? Yet she wanted it, she admitted to herself. Was a new chapter in her ^e opening? Her mind was full of conflicting emotions — excitement and romance and confusion. What would this lead her into? Her previous experiences had been bewildering. As she tiaought of her past, it seemed to her that then, young and immature, she had been like a derelict ship, tossed about by circumstances and the desires of men. Poya was the first man she had ever respected and cared for, and his love seemed to be sincere. This home ms a picture of tranquillity, a haven of rest. The future was uncertain. She dared not rlitnic of it. There would surely be complications.

Was she doing something wrong again? If her mother had been* living, or if she had met the right man at the start, her whole life would have been diflferent. She would have been able to offer Poya a pure, xmtamished love, with nothing to conceal. Would he understand if she told him of all her pasjt? But should she? Luckily, she had not told him evet3rthing. It was good to. hear him say, "I love you as you are.” She knew she had wronged no one, yet in her always was a sense of regret, ap apprehension that she might be unworthy. She had at last found the man she could look up to, and trembled lest yesterday’s courtship should be only a casual accident, of no consequence to her. However, it was so important that she would not risk it by telling him now her whole history. She would wait until she knew him better and this love had matured. Ihen she comforted herself by thinking that if Poya married her, it would be his second marriage also. She was not

wholly unworthy of him. . . . What was she thinlring Qfj iSferrying Poya? Was she insane . . . ? And now there was the war. Even if she became Poya’s wife she could not guess what lay ahead. Ardently, and in confusion, she wished she knew what the next few days might bring forth.

In this confused state of mind she dozed o3 again. When she woke at half-past eight, she heard to her surprise Poya’s

footsteps. She saw him through the window going into Grand-uncle Feng’s court. In Lola’s room across the parlour all was yet qmet. She got up to toll the window paper higher, so that she might be sure to see Poya coming out again, perhaps even exchange greetings with him. She dressed hurriedly. XSi^enPoya came out, he saw her standing at her window, smiling and wavii to him. He turned and came towards her beneath the porciu

‘TTou are up so early?” he asked with a smile.

“Come in,” she signalled.

He tiptoed into the parlour, and she was at her bedroom door to greet him. She had put on a quilted black n%lig6, and her hair was only half done, with curls in front. She had not yet made up her face, but it had the glow of youth, and the comws of her eyes were full and smooth. She whispered that Lola and her husband were still asleep and asked hirn to come into her room. They spoke in low tones, yet her vmice had the rich resonance of one waking after a sound sleep.

As Poya bent and kissed her, it seemed to her that many of the doubts in her mind had melted away.

**1 tsxa& over to talk with Granduncle before he goes out,” he sdd. “I wanted to settle plans for my departure. But it wasn’t that.- I -was up early and somehow my feet found their way to you by themselves. I can see in your fece that you slept well.”

"Poya, I want this to last for ever. That is all my heart wante. But we cannot meet like this. We must go down to Shanghai as soon as possible.”

“Th^ was what I came to speak to Granduncle about. Steamet betto from Tientsin ate hard to get, and credit must be arranged and Ka^ wants to buy a few things. I told her she could get erorythmg slw wanted at Shanghai, but she said that she had to buy presents for her relatives. I sh^ be going out with her rViis

m(Mn^. Can you and Lola and the others come over for lundi?”

Tees.”

J8

"Are you all ready for the voyage? Can I buy you anything?”

‘1 don’t need anyming. But buy me some Taosiangchun sweets and salted gizzards and Foochow olives.”

"Do you love gizzards?”

"I love them — anything that has to be chewed. Do you Uke

them too?”

“I keep a jar of them at my bed and chew them at night while I read.”

"How wondfitfull So do II”

Poya left. This morning meeting was very reassuring to her. All that he had said of love last night, then, was not only the result of chance circumstance, of momentary impulse. His expression showed that.

When Lola was up she saw that Malin’s ftce sparkled more than usual. Malin told her that Poya had come to speak to the Granduncle about arrangements for departure, and tmt they had been asked for lunch.

*T thought I heard you whispering,” said Lola.

“We wMe afraid to disturb you,” replied Malin.

It was one of those perfect days of the P eking autumn, dry and sunny and invigorating and peaceful in the court-yard. The romance of last night’s meeting stiU lingeted in Malin’ s min d, holding the promise of something unknown, and this morning ’s casual, brief meeting — ^that kiss, the toudi of his hands upon her shoulders — ^left behind in her room an exquisite aroma. It did not matter that the pale, hardly discernible ftagrance came feom

the magnolias that she had plucked, now standing in the vase. There was a strange excitement in the air. Sitting before the mirror, setting her curls, she thought of what she should put on for this day. She dressed carefully every day, but to-day was different. Dressing beautifully was a matter of self-respect; a woman would dress properly even if she were only going through the park, expecting to be seen only by strangers. But dressing for tiie approval of a particular man, the man she loved, was much more. It was only a lunch at home, and she must dress simply. Her hair-dress, like all works of art, must not suggest too much ejSbrt. It should suit her fece, be natural and hs^onious. She knew that Poya had been struck by the red birthmark under her right ear. She had tender ears, rather thin and tapering below, and this a fortune-teller had told her v^ a bad sign; all long-lived,

‘lucky” persons have long heavy ear-lobes to retain their luck. Consequently she usually spread her hair to cover her eats- partially. An inspiration came to her, that this morning she shi-tnld gather her hair back with a large clip. Her fece was small, and this made her look almost like a schoolgirl. The novelty appealed to her, and it left her red mark in clear view.

The birthmark was of that striking bright vermilion which is seen in certain small mountain lizards. What relation the ver-

milion had to virginity no one knows; but tradition has it that a woman’s chastity can be tested by lizard’s blood. A lizard is fed on seven catties of vemiilion cinnabar, or mercuric sulphide, and its blood is placed on a woman’s arm, where it is said to m^e a permanent vermilion stain, but as soon as the woman has had relationship with a man, the st^ changes colour. That is why a lizard is called “dbamber guard” {sboukm^ in the Chinese classics. Malin’s mark happened to be of tms bright colour, and was known as a "cinnabar birthmark,” considered a rare trait of beauty.

Malm also remembered that she was going to Poya’s rooms at noon. She had seen his study and had watched him play the piano there. Since she could not decide what dress he would like best, she fell upon the only clue she had, that she must dress as if she belonged there, so that it would be pleasant for him to see her in his home surroundings. She must dress simply to give a familiar efiect, with no jewels except the emerald bracelet which must remain on her arm for life, because it could not be stripped off. As a result of so much deliberation, she put on her old pale blue short-sleeved gown, which would match with the deep Wue carpet in his study.

At about twelve, she went over with lola and Tan and Tsien, because she said she wanted to look at Poya’s sttldy and they had nothing else to do. Poya and Kainan Imd not returned. The court was in the easternmost end, and was unusually large and deep for a Peking house. The rooms were heavily carpeted and the western and middle rooms served as the parlour, being

separated only by narrow partitions at the sides. 'Ihe western end was furnished with biadewood curio stands, in which stood various vases and a collection of small white Sung porcelain and bowls, and Kuyuehsien ware with its delicate coloured enamd designs.

hfalin strolled alone into the separate house in the west of the

coiut, which Poya had fitted out as a scholat’s studio. On the wall two large Han bronze mirrors, some calligraphy scrolls, and a picture in ink of a bkd on a brandb fascinated by a snake. On a tea-table stood a tea-set of rustic Ishing earthenware, and the tops of the bookshelves were filled with curious bric-d-brac — crusty swords, a green-tinted small bell, and an arched old ivory piece ■with Tao Yuanning’s entire prose poem On "Retirement carved on a space an inch high and two inches wide — thing s more antique and curious than beautiful. The southern end ofthe room formed a section by itself with a studio couch in modem style, a piano, and a modem floor lamp. The contrast between the two sections was striking; while the main part of the room kept to the austere rigidity of a Qiinese interior, the southern end was modem and comfortable and more intimate. This was Poya’s comer for reading and relaxation. Cushions lay in disorder on the couch and newspapers were spread out on it. Beneath the couch was a

leopard skin on which were Poya’s slippers. As no one else was in the room, she picked up the slippers, touched them gently, afiHj feeling guilty, put them down carefully in their original position. She sat on the piano stool and gazed at the music that she had heard him play. • On the piano she noticed a pair of toy cymbals and a little copper bell and she was amused and wondered what he could be doing with these playthings. Near by was a novelty clock in the form of a tiny bird in a golden cage, the bird frifning its head at the tick of eve^ second. Poya loved such little things. She chuckled aloud. Her eyes fell upon a glass jar con's taifiing salted and dried ducks’ gizzards, standing on a low table at the head of the couch. “Ahl there it isl” she said to herseE She could not help taking a piece firom the jar and chewed it ■with satisfiiction.

The company gradually drifted idly to the study. Malia was at Poya’s desk in the middle of the room, touching a piece of fossilized bark a foot long. She was still chewing, because a gi'WMfd properly dried and hardened could last twenty minutes, and she loved to chew very slowly, biting off small fibres at a time.

‘*What ate you eating?” exckuned Lola,

Malin showed her what was in her hand and smiled.

An old woman servant entered brm^ing tea. Seeing what hfalin was doing, she said, **Siaocbieh, this is what the master loves most. Nobody is allowed to touch it.”

Malin went to the jat and passed it, though only Tsien took a gizzatd. She even offered the jar to the servant, but she said, "We dare not. ... In this house only the master can touch that jar. . . . Even the mistress dare not”

Malin* laughed as she put the jar back in its place. To the brightened maid she said, "If the master asks, say I will replace them. There are plenty to be had.”

Soon Poya and Kaman returned and Poya came over to the study, with packages in his hand. To his surprise, he found Malin perched on his high hardwood chair and lea nin g over the desk. She was ergamining a jade vessel, a sipi, or ‘Tjrush bath,” exquisitely carved in the form of rising moxmtain peaks, with a small basin below containing water. Malin was playing with the writing brush in it. She remained in her seat when Poya entered, and darted a glance at him with a smile. As it happened the bright green of her emerald bracelet matched perfectly with tibat of the jade water vessel. Her new hair-dress, gathered and clipped bdbind her neck with a few ruffled curls spread round her forehead, and her small body p^ched in the high chair against the unusually high blackwood table, combined to give a strikingly childish effect. Poya stood speechless. Malin, still bathing die brush,

smiled again without raising her heavy eyelashes. It was wicked. She shoffld not have smiled, and if she di(^ she should have looked up at his £ice; as it was, her smile seemed to indicate a secret thought. Scribbling some characters on the big antique ink slab, still without raising her head, she said, 'Toya bsiimg, someone has stolen your gizzards from the jar. You had better go and count them.” Then* she picked up the small remainder of the lying on the desk and bit it mischievously.

Poya looked towards the glass jar and laughed.

“She is a beaver,*' remarked Lola. “She has been moving her' jaws up and down for the last half-hour. If you shut her up here for a week, she would chew the whole house down — ^furniture and beams and couch and cushions and all.”

They all laughed, and Poya thought of his parcels and said, "See what I have brought. There is enough here for you to chew for a whole week.”

In the packages were dried gizzards and big sun-dried beans and spiced melon seeds and “cowhide candy” — ^the last so because it was tougih and elastic like cowhide.

<Sa

“What a coincidence!” tematked Lola.

Malin took two gizzards from a package and went and put them in the jar. ^

‘1 stole two,” she said to Poya, “and the maid was so that I told her I would replace them in case Master should ask.”

Koinan now came in. She appeared happy after her shopping and a little flushed with the sense of preparing for a joimae^ Malin ofered her the sweetmeats spread out on the fa hlo This reversal of the hostess-gpest relationship and the coarse wrapping papers rather hurt Kainan’s matronly pride; and she with a smile.

When dinner was served and they went to the dining-room on the east, Kainan asked Malin to sit next to Tsien, whi^ pleased him. K^n had told Lola that Tsien would malr^ a good match for Malin, and he thought so himself, since he was the only unmarried young man. and Malin had seemed to be friendly to him. Kainan had seen Poya flirt with MaUn, but she had seen him flirt also with other women, and she was comfortable and wifely and assured.

When as a surprise, ordered by Poya without his wife’s know-ledge, ihe maid served gizzard soup followed by a dish of hard-fried gizzards, there was general laughter at Malin’s expense. She glanced at Poya and he smUed silently.

As foey talked about preparations for the journey, Lola sighed and said she wished she could go south with them.

'^id you hear the gunfire last night, about supper-time?” asked Kainan. “The people at the Tungan Bazaar were saying that thw broke a prison last night.”

"Our men did it, out guecailas,” said Poya. “It is a prison just outside Yungtingmen.”

“Some say five hundred prisoners were set free and joined the guerrillas. Some say a thousand. Nobody knows,” added Kainan.

After a while, Poya said, ‘Tm glad we are going away. Didn’t you feel it?” he said, looking at his wife.

“Feel what?”

"The sense of doom. To see so many Japs about. At least half a dozen “hospitals’ have sprung up between East-One and East-Four Pailou. They poison the atmosphere. I don’t mean just the “hos^l^’ selling heroin. I mean the people’s feces, the sullenness on Chinese fe<%s and on Japanese feces. How can these two

people live togedier? .You feel that no adjustment is evet possible. Peiping is now a Japanese dty. Then let them be conquerors and look their part. But they cannot. They cannot be dignified and self-assured. If they could look confident and at ease, you could say, that is all right, they have taken Peiping and they are going to keep it. There would be a sense of finality, of something settled. But they can't be confident and self-assured and courteous. They can't command your fear or win your good will. What is the matter with them?"

While the others were eating, Poya went on. "I never saw such mute creatures as the Japanese shopkeepers, looking like perse-cuted animals. My rickshaw puller said: 'The East-Ocean people are just like ourselves, except that they cannot laugh.' He said that he was puUing a Jap, and a dog which had run away with a wooden sandal was yelping and pranking about with it. 'The street people all stood and roared with laughter, except the Japanese who had lost his sandal and the man I was pulling. The dog wasn't going to hurt him. But the Jap at my back Tsou! tsoul Imagine their being afraid of a dogl' I asked the puller what he thought of the white people, and he said, 'They are strange, fearful people. They smell. You can smell butter even though you are running in front of them. However, they can laugh, just like ourselves, but not these East-Ocean people.' "

After dinner, they went to the study. Poya took out two new bank-not^ of the Japanese Federal Reserve Bank, one of one yen

with a picture of Gjnfudus on it, and one of ten yen with a'

picture of Wen Tiensiang on it.

“Of all people,” he said, “they choose Wen Tiensiang! There

is one of hundred yen, wih the picture of the Yellow

though I have not seen it. How will the puppets like it? Wen

Tieiwiang was kept in captivity by Kublai Khan for years in

Peking after he was captured, and was treated with every respect

and offered every honour, but he reftised to serve the Mongol

conqueror and preferred death. What do you make of that? I

know the^ Japanese idea is to make this puppet government appear

really Chinese before the people. Th^ will be ridiculousl”

Malin was staring at the picture of Wen on the banknote in

her hand. For Wen Tiensiang and Yofei are <x>nsidered probably

the two most fomous patriots in all Chinese history. “Did he

really look like that?”

imaginary. He is one of Chiang

^ T „ . ® J®I^Q®se must have got the idea £tom one of the Siamitt

^ scii^I books. They pick up all the fine-sounding Qiinese

P^es, hke co^tence’ and "co-prosperity’ and the "Kang’s

nc^ ^ Sincerity* and ‘co-operation,’ and use them and expect

swallow them. Who invented liese phrases? Why try to

Tiensiang’s song on

c ^°’ i^ialin^ a little ashamed. “Of course I have heard

of the poem.”

AIT stands for— The Spirit of Integrity.

. ® patriots of Qiinese history who refused to bow to

oreign rme and were noted for their courage and integrity are

mentioned m the song. General Yen’s head, and Yen Chang-

® f Ch^g Liang’s iron missive thrown at the

tyran is m Emperor to assassinate him — ^in the song all ate

symbols or manifestations of the Spirit of Integrity. Qiang T.kfig

S“®triUa. What if all Qhdnese were reminded of him

anc^ieoms assMsination methods? What if we were reminded

° ^.'■^^gshan’s tongue which continued to denounce and

^ at ms captors on the execution ground, because he would not

tm^ ot surrender? The Japanese probably think that if they put

on no^ the pictures of Confucius and Wen Tiensiang and

tbe Yellow Emperor, we would not smear them with de&matory

comments.” ^

For the population of Peiping had their oblique way of showing

disappto'^ of the puppet rule. Many of the previous puppet notes nad been scribbled over with the names of the puppet rulers, and rematb such as “traitor,” “don’t want face,” “selling coun^ slave,” “kowtowing to barbarians,” and even more soirruous insults. It was not known who started this trick, but It rapidly ^ew popular. There were so many of the notes that the users claimed ^t they had received them from others. The pupp^ complained to the Japanese General, and an order was issi^ tt^ notes bearing insults would not be accepted as legal t^der. This proved, however, only an excuse for merchants to refuse these notes, which they were all too glad to do, since the notes were not exchangeable even for Japanese yen. They had

always had to be accepted below par, and the merchants preferred the notes of the Gbinese Central banks. The order therefore had to be rescinded, and now new notes were being put in circulation with pictures of Chinese historical heroes on them. It was as if Hitler, conquering Italy, were issuing bank-notes with the figure of Ma22ini,or were flooding a conquered Switzerland with bank-notes showing the picture of William Tell. But the Japanese could not see the humour of it.

Usually after such a home lunch, people retired to their own rooms. But the midday October sun was just right, and the

charm of the moment was upon them. There was a sense of imminent departure, as if something was going to break up. Who knew how many more such auturon days they would be able to spend together? Malin’s sprightliness before lunch had put them in a good mood, and the Uttle court-yard, now catching the full midday sun, had a quiet charm. Kainw was happy because of her coming departure, Malin had no reason to wish to leave, and Lola had something on her mind. The men, as usual, did not count at home; when they were bored or when they wanted to be really important, they could always leave their homes. So the company arranged themselves round tibe couch in the southern end, while MaUn loitered along Ae bookcases, e x a m i ning the books and cracking melon seeds between her teeth, and finally seated herself again on Poya’s high desk chair.

Just then they heard gun&e in the distance. Lola, who was usually well poised, was frightened. The guerrillas had been fighting neM the city, and in the last fwo months they had often heard the distant boom of cannon, but still it disturbed her.

“What is to become of us after you are gone?" she asked Poya, who was sitting in an armchair smoking his pipe. “What is to become of Peiping? How long is this war going to last, you think?”

“One or two years, perhaps three, who knows?” he answered.

"Two or three yearsl” exclaimed Lola. “Do you think we can

fight that long?”

“Of raurse we can,” he said, mote prophetically than his own calculations warranted.

“But what is to become of us? When ate you coming back?

“Who knows? This is not going to be just another short

wat like the Shanghai wat of 1932. You might as well get used to the idea.”

“You don’t mean that we ate going to be shut up here and heat the guns for two or three years?”

you want Qiina to win, you must expect that. Our guerrillas will give them no rest.”

■ “If it is going to last so long, Shanghai would be a better place for us to live in. We could stay in the Intei-narinnal Settlement.”

“There is even worse fighting and bombing in Shanghai now,”

said Poya, with a soft chuckle.

“What are we going to do?” asked Lola, disconcerted.

“Make no mistake, this is going to be a long war. In 1932, the Nineteenth Route Army was fighting; now the whole nation is fighting. It is not a question of Shanghai or Peiping, or which is s^er. Nowhere will there be complete safety. Who knows what will happen to Shanghai? The war will go on to the interior. We will all be refugees. What will become of us and of this garden, we cannot guess. In Peiping there will be as much safety as in bWchuria. Tlus is called a ‘feUen area.’ You have to make up your mind to go on living, or rather merely existing, in this impossible atmosphere of an occupied city,— or become a refugee inland.”

“I did not think it was as bad as that,” said Lola, rather dis-heartened. ‘^e had better go to Shanghai. I thought Malin was a refugee and had to come here. Are we now to be refugees ourselves?”

“Malm a refugee?” asked Poya.

"She is taking refuge in our house,” rq)lied Lola.

Malin, sitting alone, looked aaoss at Lola and smiled, still nondbal^dy cracking melon seeds.

"I want to go to Sl^ghai, too," said Tsien, thinking of Malin's going there.

"It may be better for you," said Poya, seriously. "Peiping is rotting before our eyes. I suppose one can stand it until one becomes senseless. But this cannot last. Our people are sullen, and the enemy are sullen, too. And our people will go on feeling fiitalistic about being unconquerable, and the Japs will go on feeling fatalistic about conquering us, telling themselves that they obviously have taken the city and can keep it by their superior

guns, and feeling very unhappy about it. Do you know why they ate unhappy? They are firightened, just as anyone who relies upon the protection of guns is frightened. It is frightening to &ce a pistol, but it is as frightening to hold a pistol in your hand. You can't relax."

Tan interrupted. "But the British have held India by their guns for over a hundred years."

"You ate mistaken," said Poya. "The British hold India down by their charm."

"What charm?" said Tan, gulping with surprise.

“By being h^dsome,” said Po3ra, to provoke him.

“You ate twisting the facts,” said Tan. "What do the Hindus care for British handsomeness? They hate the English as mudb as the Koreans hate the Japs.”

“Yes, they hate them and they respect them — or fear them, I should rather say. That is their chaim, the charm of appearing like natural masters. The charm of a snake, if you like. The charm of confidence and bearing and going about in their own costumes and eating their own food and talking their own language and expecting everybody to talk theirs, , too. Don’t forget: the British keep about as many soldiers in the whole of India as the Japanese have had to keep in tiny Korea after almost four decades of conquest. How do you suppose a handful of English men and women are able to live in some outpost Indian village and keep themselves from being murdered by the natives?' Not by guns and aeroplanes, but by their British sun-helmets and shorts and their impossible worsted stockings, and their ladies’ muslin dresses and thek croquet parties, and by talking to thp^ir servants in the natural confident tone of masters. The charm of a snake, I say. Imagine the Japs taUting to Chinese servants in a natural co mm a ndin g tone. They swagger instead, or slap your free. And when they get drunk, they disgrace themselves as no other people disgrace themselves. I tell you that all thek lives they have lived in fear, fear of thek own police, thek own army. And you put them in a foreign coxmtry and suddenly ask them to

behave Hke masters. They just can’t do it. When they are drunk aU thek ugly repressed fears come out. The Japs have not got ^Sl^^ cannot be gracefiil, and that is why they

"You like tite British in Shanghai?” asked Tan, piqued.

“I do,” said Poya. “I respect them as a nation. I hate their foreign policy, but I like them as individuals.”

“In Shanghai only the compradores like them.”

'TBut do Shanghd compradores like the Japs? That is all the difierence, the kmck of m a k i n g yourself liked by your associates. But I am speaking of the British in general.” Po^ was really an admirer of the l^glish , through the influence of his unde Afei, who had been educated in B^gland. Like all English-returned students, Afei u^s intensely loyal to the English and he had spoken to Poya about their courage and their humanity, their loydty to fidends and their self-confidence. It was the self-confidence wMch appealed to a man like Poya. He continued, “Go to Shanghai and watch the British, and see how the street people feel towards them. They respect and rather fear them, don't they? The British ofScer will show himself equally kind to an old woman or a dog or a child. A Japanese cannot stoop to be kind to a dog or a child, because he is aftaid he will be losing his dignity.”

As they continued to listen, Poya went on, “I sometimes fed sorry for those Japanese small shopkeepers. They are so gentle and quiet and submissive. All they want to do is to make a living. But the army and the police must go with them wherever they go. Then there are the ronin, the scum of Japanese society. The army officers bully the mm, but exploit ffiem and fetten themselves on opium profits — that is part of the army system. The romn hate the army for their bullying and red tape and extortions in issuing opium licences, but feel dependent upon them for protection. And the quiet business man, who wants only to make a living for his wife and children, hates both of them because no Chinese will come into his shop. The Japanese owner of a little stationery store near a school in the East City went to the Chinese

E rindpal of the school and begged him to ask the pupils to buy :om his store. He knows that he is suflering for the terrible acts of their army and the rowdyism of their rdfians. The Chinese principal told me that he promised to speak to the students, but what good would lhat do if the children would not go into the shop?”

“But British imperialism is imperialism all the same,” countered Tan. He had written his graduation thesis on British imperialism in the Fat East, and was trying to turn the talk to his fiavourite subject. “Look at Singapore, at Hong Kong. What difference

was there between the East India Company and the South Manchurian Railway? And it was the British who made an alliance with Japan to protect their Far Eastern interests."

"Of course," said Poya, "British imperialism is the more terrible because they have the knack of succeeding. The British have been at it since the sixteenth century. The Japanese are new at the game. In one or two hundred years, they may be able to rule a colony and learn to make themselves liked. Guns are not enough for imperialism, and that is all they have. Imperialism is a human art."

"I don't believe it," replied Tan. "ItisaU economics. It is all a question of supply and demand, and raw materials and markets."

"So they say at the colleges," said Poya. "It is like opening a store. Of course you have to know about book-keeping and about the purchase of stocks and profit and depreciation and capital and ae^t. But in the final analysis it is the art of making your customers like you and come back again. Imperialism is a subtle human art, the art of ruling men, especially men of foreign races and cree<h, and you must understand human nature. The Japanese seem to have learned imperialism from the army textbooks."

Tan was at heart as anti-Japanese as any, but, as a college

graduate, he liked to affect the cool, objective, academic point of view, the fiital weakness of modem intellectuals, a kind of Satanic

E ride in being inhuman. “The Japanese are not so stupid as that,” e said. “After all, they are trying to cultivate Qiinese friend-ship, with this East-Asia Cultural Association and the idea of uniting the yellow race to drive out the white people. They may not succeed at present, but from a long-range point of view, they may.”

“Yes, they may.” It was Poya’s habit to accept an argument and undermine it slowly. “They may succeed as champions of Oriental culture if they can stop bayoneting women and childten on the roads right outside this city. They are so clumsy at it. You saw the photograph of the]^t-Asia Cultural Association in the newspapers a few days ago. The Chinese traitors were in it, looking like lost souls, so calm and philosophic and un-ashamed. The Japanese in uniform look alert and progressive. Eoihara looks bright and earnest, and Tung Kang looks suave and tall and apathetic. But you cannot escape the impression that

it is the Japanese who are the dupes in this whole show and not the Qiinese. The Chinese comedians know it is a force, but the Japanese comedians don’t, and that results in a deeper comedy.

They cannot use that kind of propaganda with the Qunese. It is like the handbills they dropped from the sky about the Japanese loving the Chinese. It is the work of the Japanese Army mind, which is an infontile miad. And even &e Chine se rickshaw coolie's mind isn't infontile. So . . ."

Tan was mortified. He wanted to say more, but he was aficaid of being thought pro-Japanese and so was quiet. Poya looked at Malin. She had finished eating melon seeds and was scribbling .dharacters on the antique ink slab, her emerald bracelet dinking against the desk.

"What ate you doing?" Lola was asking.

"I am practising caUigraphy."

"Don't be so charming," exclaimed Lola.

"Charm is what the British have got and the Japanese haven't got. . . . Yousee, I heard every word that was said." She tilted her head, evidently trying to roake a powerful curving stroke, and opening her mouth wide as she did so.

"You look so comfortable and self-assured," said Poya.

"Like the British," said Malin. She laid the brush down and began pulling out the small drawers of the table one by one, playfully examining their contents.

“Dammitl Dammitl” she said.

“What are you saying? Are you looking for something?” •

“I am imitating the British.” .

“Do you know what that word means?” asked Poya.

“I know. It is a sweat word.”

“That is not a good word to use, I warn you.”

“But that is all I hear in Shanghai and Tientsin. It sounds so superior and dignified. Don’t you think the English hold their Empire by saying Dammit! Dammitl everywhere and aU the time?”

“It noay be,” said Poya.

'*Dammit! Dammit!” Malm repeated. “Do I sound superior now?”

“You sound too sweet for an imperialist.”

"Dammit!” said Malin mote vehemently, and th^ laughed.

“You know I can always tell an American foom a Britisher. The

Englishman says My Gamd! and the American says My Guardi^
Malin imitated the accents perfectly, and the company laughec
■with her.

‘'Where did you learn this?’^

“Oh, one hears it everywhere. One Englishman scolded me
because I was imitating him. He said dafjjmit was all right, hui
g)dammit was a bad word to be used only when you are really
angry. You don’t use it unless you want to get into a fight
Another phrase the Americans are very fond of using is oh boji
or ob belli They sound as if they really can fight when they sax
'that.”

“Where do you meet all these Americans?”

“Oh, everywhere — ^in Shanghai at cafes, night clubs, and in the
streets. What Poya bsimg was saying is quite true. We respect
the British in Shanghai because they will not eat our food. You
never see an Englishman go into a Chinese restaurant. It makes
us feel mortified and humble as if all we were eating was dirt,
and it makes them seem superior. Now you see the Jap soldiers
and tourists swarming into our restaurants and eating as if they
had never tasted chicken in all their life. That is bad for Japanese

imperialism.”

“But it is because Chinese food is better than Japanese raw fish,” said Tsien,

she said, “they should not do it. If the two nations were not at war, it would be all right. But if they want to conquer us, they must not go into our restaurants. They must stick to their raw fish and look happy about it and say Dmmitl like

the Englishman.” Picking up a melon seed, she said, “Did you ever see an Englishman crack a melon seed? When the English-man cracks mdon seeds, his whole empire in tihe Far East will collapse.”

Poya chuckled. “That is what I say. If you want to be a con-queror, you must be sure of yourself. You cannot brandish your guns all the time. The Japanese are brandishing their gi^s because they are not sure of themselves. I never saw such nervous soldiers as the Japanese in this city. I remember an American moving picture I saw. A man was in a room, and a bandit came in with his pistol. The man calmly walked forward, empty-handed, right up to the bandit with the gun pointing at his chest. And it was the l^andit who got

nervous. That is what I mean by being sure of yourseE”

The boom of guns was heard again in the distance. A distant crromb seemed to reverberate like distant thunder. ‘‘They are at it againl” said Poya. “Something is going on out there in the western suburbs.” More gunfire followed; then they heard aero-planes in the sky, fiying over the city towards the Weston Hills.

CHAPTER V

So SUDDEN are the happenings in wartime that the most carefully laid plans must often be altered. The night before, the guerrillas under old Grandma Chao, “Mother of the Guerrillas,” had made a daring raid on a prison outside the city wall of Peiping, setting ftee five hundred prisoners. Some of the patriots, including some students of the North-eastern University, had been captured with the help of the puppet police, and Mrs. Chao had planned the r^cue. About a dozen men went to the prison at dusk, a few disguised as Japanese oflScers, overpowered the prison guards, and took the keys. The prisoners were promised their freedom and asked if they would join the guerrillas. One and all shouted that they wanted to join, including some of the Chinese guards, and followed the leader back to the hills, taking with them sevefal dozen pistols, a few automatic rifles, and ammunition.

Tbs latest act of the guerrillas happening so close to the city of Peiping, swelled their numbers. What was more important, it

made the Japanese lose face and the guerrillas grow in prestige, and gave &e impression that the enemy was fer from conquering the city.

To-day^'s cannonfiring was more a show of force than an actual battle. There was no battle, because the guerrillas could not be located.^ The aeroplanes were sent to scout and to make an impression on the mountain fighters. They dropped a bomb near a temple and flew back after making futile circles in the sky for an hour.

^ Recognizing that something had to be done in a helpless situation, the Japanese intensified the search of civilians passing

through the city gates, and started police raids in many homes for hidden guerrillas.

On the morning of the fourth day, four Chinese police appeared at Poya’s home, led by a Japanese minor officer. Among them was a Manchurian interpreter. It was about eleven, and Grand-uncle Feng was away. Old Mrs. Feng, scared out of her wits, hid herself in her room. The police were led to Poya’s court, where he was made to fill out a form, giving the names of all the occu-pants and the servants, their age, se:!t, positions, and business

connections. The Japanese seemed to be puzzled and asked:

“Why is there this American flag flying?”

“The owner is an American lady.”

“What is her name?”

“Miss Donahue.”

“Where is she?”

“She is at Tsingtao.”

Poya was made to answer questions about her age and pro-
fession, and when he showed the house lease, the Japanese officer
scowled and examined it for a long time until Poya finally referred
hitn to the American Embassy.

The officer, a short, stodgy person in his cap and uniform and
high army boots, spent a long time admiring the curios, paintings,
and furniture of the house, apparently quite surprised at the site
and number of the courts. With his hmds in his breeches pockets,
he kept looking about, very alert, his chin out and his head tilted
upwards, as if everything was too tall for him, his head bobbing
up at every step in a habitual effort to make himself taller by lifting
his steps higher than usual. The tall Manchurian interpreter
followed him, while the local puppet police merely slouched

behind.

By the time they came to Lola’s court, the Japanese was in the mood of one who had discovered a pleasure garden, surveying the rooms more like a tourist than like an officer on duty. The people in the coyirt had been warned, and Lola, her husband, and Tsien were sitting in the parlour. The Manchurian asked their names and ticked them off on the list. The officer spent much time contempkting the paintings on the wall and the curio stands. He toted with his foot the thickness of the carpet, grinning to himself, consdous of being looked at, maititaining a balance between official dignity and ill-concealed approval. Then he

strode into Lola’s bedroom, where he gazed at her perfume bottles and ted slippers. Conung back into the parlour, he took a cigarette firom the table. The Manchurian hastened to hght it for him. Still stamping on the heavy carpet with pleasure he took the light from the Manchurian. His eyes scte^ up into a tiarrow^ slit, with the cigarette in his mouth.

He pointed to the name of Malin, not yet ticked oflF

mere is yet a Tsui Malin, said the Manchurian.

'^She is in there," said Poya, pointing to the opposite door.

Malin was m bed, suffering from a swollen gland in her neck. The Japanese officer walked brusquely in and saw the beautiful yqimg girl sitting up in bed, propped against her piUows, and said to Poya, who had followed:

"What is the matter with her?"

MaUn replied softly that her neck was troubling her.

"What is her relation to you?"

"She is no relation," answered Poya.

"What is she doing here?"

"Nothing."

Whether or not there was any idea in his head, the Japanese nmde a gesture of t h i nking , and with some hissing noises between his teeth, he made the M^churian ask again.

'How^can a person live in a house and be not a relation anfl do nothing?" This was an incomprehensible situation to a Japanese.

"She is a guest of my auqt," answered Poya, pointing to Lola at the door. Lola nodded in confirmation to the Ma nr^nr jq-n ^

who was taking notes.

This seemed to be still unsatisfectory.

“Where was she bom?”

Malin was now really ficightened. Prompted by Poya to reply, she said, “In Shanghai.”

“Then why is she here?” This was an even more incompre-hensible myatery.

“She is visiting her ftiend,” Poya repeated, a little impatiently.

“To what school did she go?”

Malin answered timidly, “I never went to school.”

The Japanese shook ms head, as if sure that something was not right. It seemed an unnecessarily long ordeal
is her fether’s name?”

“I have no fethcr,” she said.

"What is het motihet’s name?”

When Malin seemed unwilling to answer, the Manchurian told het that it was routine. ‘'When the East-Ocean people ask, you must reply. It does not matter what you say.”

"Where have you been living the l^t ten years?” he went on.

"In Shanghai and Tientsin.”

"Ate you married?”

"No,” answered Malm directly and a little sharply.

While the interpreter was recording her answers, the Japanese ofBcer’s eyes were riveted upon Malin, contemplating het with an affected air of officious puzzlement. Het white arm with the emerald bracelet resting on the soft quilt, her flushed face and het black curls, made her a lovely picture. Her head tilted to one side, she looked at the officer with a defensive, frightened state, as the fascinated bird looked at the snake in the picture in Poya’s library — ^not directly, but out of the comers of her eyes, and not observing him or receiving an impression, but pouring out of those eyes a luminous hatred and fear and wonderment. When the questioning was through, ihe officer said, winking to the Manchurian, “She is pretty.” Then turning to her, he said Hndly in his broken Chinese, "You should go to Japanese hospital. Japanese doctors are good. As good as German doctors.”

Malin was silent, but the officer added with a wide grin, “You

like Japanese, don’t you? Chinese and Japanese should be ftiends. Hahl”

Taughing the awkward, unnatural, affected laugh of the Japanese when they want to show that they enjoy a joke, he stooped over Malin and pinched her cheek. Malin shrank and gave a scream, and her eyes blazed with indignation. The Japanese; straightened himself to his military bearing, shouted to the Manchurian, and strode out of the room.

The search went on to the front court. Old Mrs. Feng did not come out and left Poya to guide the Japanese through the rooms. The o£5cer stopped before an exqiusite square white jadej'W-vessel, ten inches high, that had belonged to the collection of the Mandhu baron who md been the previous owner of this house. He turned and asked: “Chienlung?” Poya nodded.

As they had gone tiuough only half of the living quarters, they turned north-west and came to the mound and the Terrace of Swirling Waters on the pond, overlooking the red-balustraded

bridge and the otchafd beyond. The search had become *per-functoryj the Japanese oflBcet seemed to be thinking of other things in his mind.

"How long will it take to go over that side?”

"Half an hour.”

“We will turn back.”

’^J^ether the Manchurian had read the oflScer’s mind, or whether the oflScer had said something to him privately, the interpreter came close to Poya and whispered that it would be wise to buy the good will of the officer by presenting him with the white jade vessel he had admired. So in me Self-Examination Hall, Poya sent a servant with a message, and at the entrance a nntTisr servant met them with a carefully wrapped box, which Poya handed to the intetpreter. The latter said something to the officer, who smiled and uttered a single syllable, “Ahl” He put out his hand to Poya and said apparently with great respect, “A very big house,” and departed.

When Granduncle Feng returned for lunch and learned of what had happened, he was dismayed. The relatives were aU gathered in his court energetically discussing the search.

“Why should they search our house?”

“It must have been because of the guerrillas,” said Poya. “I hope I was right to present the white jade vessel.”

“Of course,” said the old man. ‘‘But we should not let ffiem see our treasures at all. Did they see the young women?”

“They had to see them to check the list.”

"It is bad,” said the old man. ‘T have hoped not to let them see the insil^e of this house, depending on the American flag. Now they have seen it. If they come once, they can come a second time. They cannot take the house, but women have been Iridnapped at night from their homes. SuA times as thesel Nor will our curios be safe. To fail to conceal is to invite the thief,” he said, quoting the proverb. “We must pack away our curios and hide them. Times are difficult enough without inviting fiirthM trouble.”

The old man sat smoking his water pipe and looking as worried as if his house had been broken into.

“This is the end of it all,” said old Feng, and sighed. “Poya, your grandfrither bought this garden, and I have tried to keep it well, but my nieces and nephew ate gone, and it is a solitary p&ce now. I shall slay here. At my age, I do not want td move about.

We must keep this garden. The ancestral tablets o£ the Yao family are here. When, the war is over, here will be a centre for all to

to. . . . The business is in ruins, but I shall try to keep it alive. As for you young people, I shall think about it.” He blew into his pipe and set it squarely on the table. Physically he seemed still very strong.

When Poya returned to Malin’s room, he found her pale and shaken.

“I cannot stay here any longer,” she said with an agitated look. “I am aficaid, Poya. Is there not somewhere for me to pass the night?”

“Do not be foolish,” he said. “Do you think they will go to the trouble of taking you to a Japanese hospital? Atid we shall be leaving soon.”

“How soon?”

“In five days, or perhaps in four days.”

“Can we not go now? Or can I go ahead?”

“Go alone? It is unthinkable, '^y should you hurry?”

“But they know my name.”

“What is the harm of that?”

‘Toya, you did not know, but you should not have given my real name. Oh, Poya,' take me somewhere for to-night.”

“What are you a&aid of? Do you think they will kidnap you at night? He was only joking about the Japanese hospital.”

Malin -vras silent for a moment and then said, “I did not like hh look. He cross-questioned me especially. I cannot sleep here to-night, I must not. Can I not go to your friend’s place?”

“To Lao Peng?”

"Yes. I can stay there for a few days until you are ready. What kind of a person is he?”

“Oh, he is a bachelor, staying alone. You don’t need to be afiaid. He is a perfisct gentleman. But are you well enough to go out?”

“Oh, it is nothing.”

“What about your things?”

“I can get them ready in a minute.”

“Well, then, if you insist. Wait till dusk and I will take you to Lao Peng. In feet, I want very much for you to know him.”

Impelled now by a gteater curiosity, Poya came tbat afternoon and insisted that Mai in tell him about her past life.

"Where shall I begin?”

“From your childhood. Tell me everything.”

“We shall have plenty of time on the journey.”

“But tell me now. It will make me feel closet to you.”

So there alone with him, Malin began to tell him of her life. Her mother had come ftom the silk district of Huchow, neat Shanghai. After she left her husband, she went with the fout-yeat-old child to Shanghai. There she taught school in the Chapei district, earning a salaj^ of fifty dollars a month. Malin’s mnthftr took her to the school until she began to teach in a hi gh school for boys, when she had to leave her at home. From an early age, therefore, Malin learned to keep house while her mother was at school and to have lunch ready when she came home at the midday recess. • Then the mother, who placed high hopes upon her daughter, taught her at night.

Malin was a child of wilftd nature. In the days when she was taken to sdiool with her mother, she had her lessons with the other children, who called her the “teacher’s child.” She had hot

arguments with them, defending her mother’s Huchow accent.
At that time, teachers were already required to teach in the national Mandarin dialect, but like most Southerners, Malin’s mother found that her own dialect clung strongly to her speech: she continually dropped the final «’j, so that she could not pronounce such a word as pan correctly. She would say pat add imagine that she was saying pan. Malin knew that her mower was wrong, as she herself had no difficulty in saying pan^ but she always insisted that her mother did say pan. She produced a sound half-way between pea and pan so that the rtwas stiU hidden somewhere, and she would go on defending her mother to the last.
But at home the child told her mother she was wrong, and tried to teacih her to produce the sound pan correctly. The mother said fondly, "My cMld, my old tongue is stiff and dumsy. I know the sound but I carmot make it. I have bc^ speakiug this way all my life. But what can I do? I have to teach for our living.” The next day the mother was touched to hear MaUn purposdy read aloud in class her new variety of pat with the hidden 0 in it, in order to vindicate her mother.

When Malin grew older and no longer went to school, she

would sit at night at the desk in their one bed-Uyiag-dining-toom, doing her own lessons and looking over the students’ notebooks

and compositions that her mother was correcting. Through watching the corrections, she learned more firom her mother than the students at school. She helped in looking up in the dictionary the radicals for the equivalents of doubtful spellings. She would see her mother’s &ce light up when a student’s composition pleased her, and then they would go over the good passages together. Malin soon became so proficient in the knowledge of letters that one day, seeing the compositions piled high on the desk, she took up the brush and tried to make a few corrections during her mother’s absence, graded the papers, and wrote some criticd comments at the end, imitating her mother’s handwriting. When her mother came home and found to her surprise some of the compositions abeady corrected, she was furious at her daughter’s audacity. Then as she examined the critical comments she nodded and smiled. Malin’s writing could pass fakly well, except that it was not quite mature.

“This comment is not bad. How did you do it?”

“Oh, Mother,” the daughter replied, “it is easy. You use not more than twenty comments. However you vary them, they are always the same phrases — ^like ‘the pen follows the thought easily,’ ‘disorderly ideas,’ ‘lucid style,’ or ‘tiger’s head — ^mouse’s tail — ’ I know all of them.”

Once, when her mother was very tired, she gave Malin permission to go over the compositions for her, warning her not to make too many corrections. Proud of this commission, Malin

did her very best. Her mother lay in bed and watched her at worL She saw how interested Malin was, underscoring and circling the good lines with real pleasure, and once giving a three-triangle mark to an excellent piece. Her mother went over her corrections, modifying some and making other corrections where necessary. The students did not know that a girl of their age had made the corrections, and when some noticed that the writing was somewhat unusual, the mother explained that she had been unwell and had done the corrections in bed.

In the daytime Malin stayed at home and attended to the washing and cooking and cleaning. Their room was in an alley, known as a “terrace,” with over-crowded red-brick buildings where everyone could look through the windows of the opposite

house tea feet across the alley. Their window happened to look across into a cofBn shop. The high colBns with raised heads and massive panels were ugly tlmgs for a young child to see, but even with such things femiliarity bred contempt.

But still she could not bear to see a child’s coflfei, or a hntr'KU woman buying one for her child. ‘Tou know,” she said to Poya, “even in death there is a difference between the rich and the poor. Sorrow strikes deeper among the poor bereaved of t h p jf kin.

Sometimes I saw rich brothers, clad in silk, come to buy an expensive cofSn for their parent, bargaining as jocularly as if they were buying a piece of ramiture.”

Growing up under these circumstances, Malin naturally went about a great deal by herself, buying at the market and shops, and in that way early learned how to take care of her money. The women and girls in the Chapei district, being mosdy from shopkeepers’ femilies or workers in the s mall Victories, madft no pretence of being secluded like rich men’s daughters. They washed, gossiped, fed their children at their breasts, railed in quarrels, and sat on bamboo stools at dusk on summer evenings to enjoy the cool air — all in the sight of everybody on the streets. When no one has more money than others, people are naturally democratic. The women and girls who were fectory workers had small personal incomes of twenty or thirty cents a day, which meant a measure of financial independence for spending on personal vanities and little amusements. In such teeming, noisy, free, and democratic lower-middle-class surroundings, Malin had spent her early 3routh, and she had therefore the independent spirit of a gicl of tiie poorer classes; The noises in the alley were terrific. Quarrels among women and children were for all to hear, and the alley was never dull for a single day. To one used to such noisy street life, a secluded house, shut out entirely from the sight of neighbours, seemed almost unbearably monotonous.

On week-ends, when her mother was free, Malin used to go to the centre of the International Settlement to visit an amusement

house, or to see a motion picture on Peking Road. In the Great World one could, by paying the admission fee of twenty cents, spend a whole day, watdiing ancient and modem Chinese plays and vaudeville, lis tening to Story-tellers and seeing an old CharUe Chaplin or Harold Lloyd comedy. Her mother, &ing of the old type, had a great love for the ‘Tbig-drum” story-teUers, and mother

and daughter used to go whenever they saw in the newspapers their fevourite story-tdler was on the programme. This was a particular form of monologue recital, told to the accompanying rhythm of a hand drum, using a highly artistic and descriptive language, set to a tune that in its emotional passages was like a song. In the hands of a master, this monobgue art could hold an audience from the beginning to the end, by its varied tempo, voice modulation, gestures, and expression, even though the story had been heard a hundred times. These short trips represented their holidays, and they often came home, after dimer at a s mall restaurant with half a catty of wine, completely satisfied and pleasantly tirpd.

It was Malm’s way to like a thing wholeheartedly, if she liked it at all. “I just became crazy about Tiig-drum’ storjrtellers, particularly about Liu Paochuan,” she confessed. 'Tn the last years, when my mother’s health was failing and she could not go

to the performances, I would go alone, much against my mother’s wish. When Liu was on the programme, I simply had to go.”

She said that listening to Liu Paochuan, the best of the story-tellers, seemed to soothe her senses and pleasuiably excite her emotions by the perfect flow of words and cadence. She loved the passage describing moonlight on the river in the story of the two ^eat friends, Poya and Chung Tsechi, in which the smooth tripping syllables seemed to paint, by meaning and sound, an image of peaceful moonlight on rippling v^ter.

' Milin recalled now the story of Poya, the namesake of the young man before her, and the passionate friendship of the two friends, in which Tsechi alone could appreciate Poya’s music, so that after his friend died, Poya refused to play his instrument any more.

‘Tt would be wonderful if Tsechi were a woman,” said Poya.

“That would be the story of Wenchun, and that is why Wenchun’s stoiy' was so long and Tsechi’s story so short.”

“I could recite the whole story by heart,” said Malih.

“Recite a bit. Let me hear it.”

After some hesitation, Malin yielded and began tapping the table in place of the drum. Her voice was soft and low, and when

she came to the passage describing moonlight on the river, she was rarried away by it herseE Her small lips dipped and moved

like ripples in Ae moonlight Poya ■was fescinated. Suddenly she broke off with a diildish laugh.

After this digression, she resumed her story.

So long as her mother was living, she ■was happy. Through overwork and insufficient nutrition, her mother’s healt h be^ to feil, but school work had to be carried on and compositions corrected. Malm had a natural optimism, always looking at the bright side of things. Her mother spent the unusual sum of thirty dollars, almost a month’s salary, on a pair of spectacles, but these did not seem to relieve her headaches, and with the headaches came bad appetite and poor digestion. Malin always said that all her mother needed was a year of rest and good food, and that her ailments could be corrected. Her mother was only forty. After a few years, perhaps, she would be and

could support her mother and give her rest after years of ceaseless drudgery for a living. But her mother steadily grew worse. She cotild not rest, and the noises in the alley ii-ritatf^ ker. It ■was at this time that Malin began to know what poverty mpgnt

and that money had something to do ■with happiness.

The end came v^ suddenly when her mother died after an attack of influenza, in three days and without going to a hospital. Malin ■was ftightened when her mother began to run a High fever and to complam of pains in the chest. She rallf^ a Western doctor, but the treatment was of no avail. The shock of her moftier's sudden death was a great blow to Malin. She suddenly realized that she ■was left alone without tnpa ng of support. She had never even thought that her mother mi ght die at this early age, and now her vague dreams of supporting her and living with her in her old age had suddenly vanished.

Malin ■was only seventeen. She kq>t ihe same room, since the rent -was only sis dollars a month. With funeral gifts from friends at the school, she ■was able to pay the funeral espenses and have about fifty dollars left. She said to the principal of the school that she would like to teach, telling her what she had done to help her mother, but the principal, though sympathetic, said that it ■was impossible since Malin md no s(ffiool cetrifiram- She began to answer advertisements for secretarial work, but many of the jobs she applied for were open only to graduates of middle schools. She fiankly told them she h^ b^ to no school but could do the work as well, and each time someone

wiiu a suauui (xroncare got tae pteteteoce. due tetused to understand it.

Next she advertised in the papers as a “femily tutor.” This ■was even more difficult. Once she got so fet as to make an appointment with a &mily who •wanted her to tutor their children in school subjects, particularly mathematics. But she knew no mathematics or social science or physics. She only knew Qiincse letters and composition. Some -wanted her to coach Chinese and Eng lish, and she did not know a word of English. Finally she did secure a job as a tutor in Chinese. The mother of the children seemed at first •very kind, but after three weeks Malin lost the job. Going back die next day to get some books she had left bdiind, she came upon a quarrel between the husband and wife. As she went in she heard the husband saying angrily, “She is a good teacher. I know the trouble. Her only fault was that she is too beautiful.” Having already lost the job, she went in, regardless of the situation, got her things, said good-bye and left quickly.

“Now I was ftightened, for my situation was serious. For days I trod the streets to answer advertisements, not even taking street cars, if the distance -was not too great, in order to save money. I had seen advertisements asking for 'young pretty missies’ as sales-girls or as help to doctors, etc. These I had disre^rded, but now in my desperation I answered some of them. One or two experiences were enough. Once I found myself in a bachelor’s apartment witii no other evidence of a business than a young

foreign-dressed occupant and very hazy plans of a company to be formed. But I ■was stiU hopeful and told myself that tf worst came to worst, I could always become a children’s nurse.

“About this time,” she went on, “some good luck came to me. I had written and sent a short story of aTOUt a thousand words to the women’s supplement of a loc^ paper, and it was accepted. At the end of the month, I received notice to go to the newspaper office to receive fifty cents, but 1 had first to have a seal made. This cost me ten cents, and the trip by rickshaw would use up forty cents, or a ride by street car would cost about ten cents. Yet if I could •write one thousand words, I could write more.

' I began to submit other articles dealing -with women’s problems, particularly women’s dependence upon men. The woman editor -was very sympathetic and promised to publish as much of my -writing as she could.

"At the end of the next month, I received a voucher for three dollars and fifty cents. With that money earned by myself in my pocket, I felt extraordinarily proud and happy. I went to a roof theatre on top of a restaurant on Foochow Road, where a young and gifted girl storyteller by the name of Chang Siaoyun (“little

Qoud") was giving monologues. Admission was twenty cents. Going up the stairs, I passed a tea-room on the second floor, where a huge crowd of common people were gathered at tables. The place was extremely noisy, for you know this was a place where private quarrels were settled by mediators who were prominent members of the clan or village to which the quarrelling parties belonged. People of all classes visited the roof theatre, among them a large eZemmt of common pleasure-seekers.

^*1 sat on a rear bench in a comer, alone, and listened to Qoud. At the conclusion of every brilliant passage, the audience literally yelped 'Hao!* in applause. I was so excited that I shouted loud applause along with the others. A young in front turned round to look at me. Thereafter he took eVery to turn round and look. I don't know what attracted bitn for I was wearing an ordinary Dutch bob without curls and a summer

dress like any poor girl on Nanking Road."

Poya interrupted Malin. "I know," he said softly. ^'The light in your eyes, something warm and unspoiled and ftesh about you drew his attention." Malin flushed and went on with her story, saying only that this was not the first time that she had seen a young man flirting with her. ... She listened steadily to the storyteller, several times turning her eyes to avoid the young man's glances.

When the girl storyteller had finished, and Malin rose and 1^,

she noticed that the young man was following her. At the top of the st^s, he stopped before her, hesitated a little, and said:

*‘Siaoehieb, I am sorry to intrude, but I saw that you were alone, and the place is very crowded. May I escort you downstairs?”

Malin looked up at him and saw now that he was well-dressed and not bad-lookmg by Shanghai standards, though a little thin and small.

"Thank you,” she replied, and went on down the stairs alone. But the young man stiU followed her.

Malin went on, ignoring him. At the street entrance, she turned, and the yoimg man, still in that begging voice, asked if he

covild send her home in his cat. She was in a happy mood that night, and she xiras young and &ee and had a keen sense of adventure. She would like to know this young man better. After all, there was no harm in having a ftiend. He could see the struggle in her fiice, and said eagerly; “You do not know me, of course. Miss Qbang will recite here to-morrow night. Can I hope to see you here agam?”

"All right," said Malin with a smile as she walked away.

This was the beginning of their romance. In the cool summer evenings which followed the hot July days, she met him many dmes in the roof theatre and in sn^ caf6s. Soon an ardent love grew between them. Romance on the streets of S hang hai by no means uncommon, but the young man— whose name M ali n did not tell Poya — seemed to be sincerely in love with her. He was gentle-mannered, with the touch of refinement on his fece, though he bore the marks of weak health and the traits of the frastrated young man of a rich family. Malin was by nature confiding, naive, and impulsive, and it was not very long before she let hitn know that she was living alone. She began to show him her published articles, which increased his admiration for her. He swore that he must marry her, but his parents must not know about it until later. One hot summer afternoon he visited her room and saw that the only window &ced the sun and heated it like an oven. He wondered how a person could possibly live in such a place, and urged that she allow him to provide a better place for her. After a few days, he found a comfortable room for her on Route Vallon in the French Concession. From that tim>» on he came constantly to see her.

Vdcy soon his parents found out about this a rr ang efnerit. The ftither, a compradore of the China Merchants* Navigation Company, could not believe , that his son was serious, and suggest^ buying the woman off, but the son stood fifm and swore that he would not marry anyone else. This brought on a

great quarrel between the ftther and the son. One day the mother appeared in Malin’s room and asked tf she would give up her son, and Malin refused, insisting that she was not marr ying him for money. Through the mother’s intercession, it was finally settled that Malm must be sent to collie if the son was to marry her. There was nothing Malin desired mote, and artangftmftnts were made for her to attend the Fu Tan College, as a speckl

student taking classes in English and piano. Her husband, to whom she was nevet ptoperly mate ied, came constantly to see het at the college and would drive her out for the week-ends. Since she had not registered at the college as her ni ghts out

created much talk at the college, and soon she was ecspelled. After about a year, the fether of the young man still hoped that his son would tire of Mdin and give her up. He refused to the marriage and said he would give them no formal wedding until they had been together two years. The Father further insisted that a complete investigation be made of the girl’s ancestry for three generations, as was the custom before en^ge-ments.

It was then that Malin told her husband about her mother’s life and about her father. The fether, a sharp, revengeful character,

capable of driving a hard bargain, was a hater of all militarists and of Malin’s father in particular. He burst out in anger and told his son to have no more to do with the daughter of the tnan who had put him in jail— a ^sgrace he could never wipe out or forget. To Malin, this complication was entirely unexpected. Her husband repeated to her the words of his father, that she was a traitor’s '^’ •.ughter, that his family must have owed hers a debt in the previous inc a r nation, and that Fate had sent her to exact tepay-ment by ruining his home.

Then one day he came and told her that his father had changed his mind, and that he was to bring het to live in his home, but that there would be no wedding. Malin was afraid and said she would prefer to live apart from his femily. But her husband told her that his fether was an autocratic old man and would not be disobeyed, and if she did not comply, would disown bim entirely.

“You know what happened after that,” said Malin

**No, I don’t,” said Poya, waiting for more.

But it was late and LoH came in and said they would soon have supper.

“I will tell you on the way,” said Malin.

So that was Malin’ s story as £at as she told it to Poya that afternoon.

*

In the evening at about half-past seven, when it was quite dark, Poya took Malin to Lao Peng’s home. A servant carried her

suitcase and an extra blanket, and bet other baggage was left behind to go with Poya when he should leave Peking.

Poya told the servant to go ahead, while they walked arm in arm in the dark..

“I agree with you now,” said Poya. “If anything should happen to you, I could never forgive myself.”

He asked her why she thought it was especially dangerous for her name to be known to the Japanese.

“Were you ever mixed up with the Japanese?” he asked.

“No, never.”

“Then why?”

“One can never be cautious enough in such times as these,” she said.

Po3^ was so absorbed in Malin that he forgot where he was going until he saw the familiar policeman at 3 ie comer twenty yards away. “Oh, we must not go that way,” he exclaimed, and turned abruptly and led her through a maze of winding alle3rs. It was dark there and he could not help kissing her.

“Will you love me for ever?” he whispered.

‘Tor ever and ever. After we reach Shanghai we must never be separated.”

“Wdl you go wherever I go?”

‘'Wherever you go, I will follow.”

“lien-erh, we belong to each other. When I saw you sitting at my desk and your white hand playing with the brush, I thought; ‘Tbat is the home I want.’ I will confess to you that I kissed the desk and the chair where you sat — and the brush that your fingers had handled.”

“Oh,Poyal”

“Yes, it made me long for you. You seemed to belong there. Oh, Lien-erh, why am I so lucky as to have you?”

She pressed closer toward him. “It is not often that one finds another who completely understands oneself. And when one does, it is such happiness. I had never known happiness until I knew you. I have had an unhappy life. Some day I will tell you aU of it. And I will be very good to you. I shall not be like Kainan. You must tell me what you like in me, and I will be just that And when you are angry, you can slap me. I want you to slap me, if I know you love me.”

“You are joking, lien-erii.”

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“No, it is true. Skpmenowl I trant you to.”

“How can I slap you? My own heart will ache.”

‘Tretend that I have done something wrong, and that you ate aagiy.” piotested Malin. “Nowl” She turned her cheek up to him.

He gazed into her eyes, dimly visible in the starlight and touched her cheek softly. ° ’

“That is not a slap,” she said.

*Trou ask me to do the impossible.” Now he pin rh ed her dieek.

“Harder!” she said.

*T would rather eat you,” said Poya.

“Cali me your beautiful slave.”

“My beautiful slave.”

Malin was satisfied with this, but Poya was left passionately disturb^. When they arrived at Lao Peng’s house, the servant was waiting for them at the door.

“You can go back,” Poya told the servant as they went in.

Lao Peng was sitting in his parlour, and seemed lost in thought. When they entered, he rose to greet them.

“This is Miss Tsui,” Poya said.

‘Toya bsiung has told me so much about you,” said graciously. “I never thought I was to disturb you like this.”

Lao Peng, bustling about, said: “Your suitcase is in my room.

Sit down. Sit down.” He oflfeted the best chair to Malit^ As she sat down she heard the springs aeak. A litde nervous, she looked helplessly at Poya.

“I am sure Uncle Peng doesn’t mind,” he s ai d.

'Tt is quite all right,” said Lao Peng in his piping voice.' He rose and walked toward the bedroom. 'Tou can sleep in my bed, if you like. It’s not very clean for siaoebieh.’*

“Where will you sleep?” asked Poya.

*‘Mrf” He kughed, quietly. “I can sle^ anywhere where there is a piece of board. I can sleep in that armchair. Do not worry about me.”

“Oh, I must not,” said Malin, looking at the wooden bed and the not too clean q^t But the room was cozy and warm.

“It is only for the night,” s^d Lao Peng. “There is another room with a small bed, but it is cold out there. I could have a stove moved in, but it will not be so comfortable.”

“Oh, do not go to such trouble,” said Malta. “We can arrange

that to-morrow.”

She felt instinctively attracted toward this middle-aged man. Poya had told her that Lao Peng was a truly great man and his own best friend. His low voice, when he spoke slowly and easily, was pleasant. She looked at the furrows on his high forehead and his shaggy grey hair and liked him still more for them. Besides, he had a c^^h, ready smile, rarely seen among persons of middle age.

am embarrassed,” she said as they came out of the bedroom, “to deprive Uncle Peng of his own bed.”

“Can you sleep on a hard board? On the floor?” said Lao Peng. “It is good for me bones.”

“When I was small, I used to sleep on hard boards with my mother,” said Malin.

They sat down, Malta still flushed with excitement.

“Why don’t you bind your hair with a clip behind, as you did before?” asked Poya.

“Do you like it?” asked Malin, and jumped up and went into the bedroom. Poya began to tell Lao Peng what had happened that morning, but in a few moments she came out, with her curls

g titered bmind her neck and a few exquisite t^s left on her rdiead.

‘T couldn’t find a mirror,” she said.

‘There is one on the wall.” Lao Peng pointed to a small rusty 'mirror hanging over the basin rack in the comer.

“Thank you, I will use mine.” She took out a small mirror from her hmdbag and began to look into it.

“Don’t you think she is the most exquisite creature on earth?” asked Poya of Lao Peng. Malin looked up at him ficom her mirror and smiled. “She has a cinnabar birthmark. Miss Tsui, turn round to let Uncle Peng see it.”

Malin turned her head and Lao Peng stood up. “Come up to the lamplight. Let me see it,” he said.

Malin obeyed and came to the lampUght, where Lao Peng looked at her closely.

“K tt^jibxcbushaebib. Very rare,” he said, touching it. Malin was tickled and shrank away. They already felt like old ftiends.

Poya went on with his story of the police raid, while Malin sat quietly.

“I understand,” said Lao Peng at length, "that you two are in love with each other.”

The two smiled at each other and Malin blushed.

"Have you made your plans?”

*‘Wc have no plans except that we must be together,” said Poya.

“And your wife?”

‘T shall provide well for her.”

"But if she will not consent?”

"Oh, that is simple. She can live where she likes. She can even have my whole house if she wants. I would rather be with Malin, even as refugees.”

"In other words, if there is no divorce, you will be Poya’s concubine,” said Lao Peng bluntly to Malin.

She blushed again at the word.

“1 want only to follow him. That is all I know,” she said.

When Poya rose to go home, he told Lao Peng that he himself would be able to leave in four or five days. Lao Peng asked him if Malin had brought enough clothing, since it was beginning to be sharp and cold in the early morning and at night. Poya said that he would bring her sweater and outer coat the next morning. Malin followed him into the court and saw bim to the gate, and pressing his hand, said fondly: "I shall see you to-morrow.”

CHAPTER VI

It is carious that a mere chance had thrown Malin and Poya’s fidend together. Although Lao Peng was much older, she had no fear of the amiable som, living austerely alone, a “Spirit of Integrity” itself, as Wen Tiensiang had called it. Poya had told her some of the things Lao Peng had done to help others and had spoken of him with real affection. She was twenty-five years old and he was forty-five and so he could have been her father. His attitude in fact was fatherly, respectful, and walm. Strangely enough, Lao Peng had the power of making her feel she was a better and worthier person. In Poya’s presence, she felt small and unworthy, perhaps a “sinful woman,” whereas in Lao Peng’s company, she was unquestionably as good a creature as any other.

Malin did not find out until later that he was a Ch’an Buddhist.

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Perhaps he -was not even a sttict*otdinaty Ch’an Buddhist, for he ate meat and chicken. The Ch’an {Zen in Japanese) is a Buddhist Sect, the peculiar product of Hindu metaphysics and Chinese Taoist philosophy. Almost like the Quakers, it dispensed with form and institutions and priestcraft and concentrated on the inner spiritual life. After the Sixth Patriarch died in the eighth century, lest the sect become an organized institution, no successor was appointed. Even the transmission of the cassock and the beggar’s bowl as the symbols of a kind of “apostolic succession” was discontinued. With its emphasis on meditation and cultivation of the inner spirit, it went even further than the Quakers by showing a contempt not only for rituals, but also for the scriptures. And instead of lengthy dialectics and metaphysical expositions, it took a curious d^ght in subtle conundnims in four-line verses known as the gatbas, whose meaning should suggest and illuminate, rather man prove, a truth. A man’s enlightenment was to come with a flash of insight into the laws of Ufe as a result of contemplation, in the so-called “sudden” conversion. A Ch’an Buddhist therefore is satisfied with living in happy obscurity a life of industry, thrift, and kindness to fellow men and animals.

Malin hardly slept in such strange surroundings. She could

hear Lao Peng snoring and the coUs creaking in his armchair. Often she thought he was awake and then she would hear him snoring heavily again. But she slept at last.

Lao Peng was an early riser. He had gone to sleep with his socks and shoes on, and at daybreak he could not sleep any more. He peered into the bedroom and saw the young girl sleepiog soundly. Careful not to disturb her, he tiptoed about and whispaed to the servant to bring hot water, and when it was brought he washed his face almost noiselessly. Then he lighted a cigarette and sat thinking. When Malin still had not waked at half-past seven, he could not wait and had his brcak&st of hot congee alone. Then he took a stroll in the streets for ficesh air. He saw many Japanese soldiers near East-Four Pailou and at eo-trances to the various beitmg £tom the Hatamen street. He bought some oil twists, thinking that Malin might like them for break&st.

When he came m and heard noises in her room, he coughed loudly.

“Are you up already?” she called. “What time is it?”

“It is about nine.”

“Oh, I must get up.”

"I have ■watef here for you,” called Lao Peng. "It is cold in there. Would you like to wash out here?”

Malin came out in her black quilted gown.

“There is the hot water. And here is a warm stove. Did you sle^ well?”

“Very well. And you?”

"I slept very well. I have been up for two hours.”

Malin began washing.

“Things do not look tight to-day ,” said Lao Peng. "Something is happening. There are many solders in the Hatamen street.”

\!{^en she had finished combing her hair, the servant in and said to Lao Peng: “There is a man outside who wants to speak to you.”

“What kind of man?”

“Just a person in a blue dress. He says he must talk to you.”

Lao Peng went out and recognized ihe man as a servant he had

seen at Grandma Chao’s house. The man would not come inside and whispered to him in the yard. Two of their comrades had been arrested this morning in the West Qty and Grandma rban herself was in hiding. She advised him to leave his house for safety, and if necessary to get out of the city by way of a certain gate, "rhe guards knew her and would let him pass if he gave the secret signal. But he should take care on coming to the gate. If a Japanese was there, it rnight be dangerous.

“Hurry. There is no time to be lost. Many soldiers are on the streets.” Saying this, the man left, and Lao Peng walked silently into the room, deep in thought. , , '

“Was it Poya’s man?” asked Malin, her comb stiU in her hand.

“No,” said Lao Peng. “You had better have your breakfiist and eat quickly. I have bought ^otatyutiao for you.”

Malin sat down at the breakfast table while Lao Peng began, ransacking his bedroom and filling an old travelling bag of blue cloth. Then he said:

“There is bad news. It is unsafe here. The Japanese are search-ing for the guerrillas and their friends. They may come to this house at any moment. This is not the place for you. I am leaving the dty immediately. You had better go bade immediately to Poya’s house.”

"I cannot go back thete.”

“It is safer than here. You want to go south with him, don’t you?”

“Yes, but he won’t be leaving for four or five days, and I can’t stay there,” said Malin. “The Japanese may go there again.”

Lao Peng was puzzled.

“But you have stayed there for a month.”

“It is different now. Where are you going?”

Lao Peng looked at her from behind his big glasses. “I shall go toward the south.”

“Oh, Uncle Peng, let me come with you. We will meet him at Shanghai. You are going to Shanghai, aren’t you?”

“I don’t know.” Lao Peng surveyed her carefully. "Miss Tsui, it is too dangerous and too Imd for you. First I have to get out of the city and I travel by land. There will be no soft beds on the

way. You don’t know what it is like. Can you walk? We may have to walk for days until we are beyond Paotingfu, where perhaps we can take the railway.”

“I can walk.”

“Can’t you stay in a hotel until Poya is ready?”

“No. They search all the hotels.”

Lao Peng could not quite understand why Malin had to be aftaid of going back to Poya’s house, but there must have been sufficient reason for her feeling so. He could see that the worry .on her fiice was genuine and her decision quite absolute. If he took her along, it would mean that he would have to accompaiqr her to Shanghai, but being a man unused to consideration fitr hhnself, he did not see how he could avoid doing this as aa obligation to his ftiend Poya. So characteristically he yielded. Not until a few days later, did he quite understand the reason fix Malin’s Bight.

“Will you not go and say good-bye to Poya?”

“No. I dare not.”

“Then we must send a message for him.”

“I am so excited that I cannot write.”

“We will send the servant, then. Now get your suitcase packed. Never mind the blanket. Have you money?”

'*1 have five hundred dollars in cash.”

“That is plenty. We will buy what you need on the way.”

In a few minutes they were ready. Lao Peng called the servaBt,.

gave him a htuidted dollats, and told him that he was going away and did not know when he would return. If anyone came, he was to say that his Master was not in the city. Then he said: “Take this blanket and go to the Prince’s Garden and tell Mr. Yao that we have gone and wUl meet him in Shanghai. Do not talk too much. Only say to people that Master is not in the dty. Now go out and get us two rickshaws.”

Malin, greatly worried, repeated to the servant: “Be sure to teU Mr. Yao ^t we are going to Shanghai and will meet hiin there.” And Lao Peng added: “Tell him I will take good care of Miss Tsui and that he is not to worry.”

They left the house, Malta with her small suitcase and Lao Peng

with his old travelling bag.

“To the north,” said Lao Peng to the rickshaw pullers. To avoid sentries he directed them to go along Nansiaochidi, following the alleyways until they were far back in the North Gty. There they changed rickshaws and went south through the West Qty. The day was sunny and groups of people were sunning themselves and gossiping on the Shunchuunen boulevard. Earcept for occasional soldiers everything was quiet and norroal. After passing Shunchihmen, Lao Peng again changed rickshaws and directed the pullers to turn west. Fifty yards ftom Sipienmen, Lao Peng got down to look about.

The dty gates of Pdping consist of outer and inner gates; beyond each gate is a semicircular wall ftom which the andent defenders could fight against an invader. If an enemy should pass the first gate, he would find hims elf in a pocket about fifty feet deep. It was in one of these that during the first days of the war a Japanese company was trapped and wiped out. Lao Peng approached a guard, who stopped him and asked: “Where are you going?”

“I will hmh to a village outside the dty,” said Lao Peng. “Kanlu,” meaning “hurrying on foot” or just “journeying,” was the secret password of the guerrilla comrades.

“You had better not,” said the guard. “Three or four Japanese are at the outer gate. Come back in the evening and see.”

“Still to-night?”

“Yes.”

T.an P eng thanke d him and turned back. His rickshaw puUer, a boy of sixteen, was waiting for him, smiling curiously.

“Can’t go thtough?” he asked.

“I hare decided not to go to-day,” said Lao Peng. “I forgot to buy a few things,” he add^ to Maiin.

This was a poor district and there were ^oups of poor people sitting in &ont of the tea-shops or gossiping or wrangling and chasing each other in fun. It was a curious, humorous crowd, ready to enjoy and comment on anything that happened at the gate. Lao Peng looked about and knew that he was among friends. The people must have known that this was a guerrilla route. Two young people, a boy and a girl who looked like students, were watching them from a near-by tea-shop. The boy student came out and asked: “Are you ktmbt or are you riding to the country?” His hair was shaggy and he had an unshaven, famished &ce.

Lao Peng looked closely at him. “I am kemlu”

The young man smiled and said: “You had better wait until to-night. Some have turned back just now. There is a place in the city wall half a It south from here where you can get over the wall, if you ate in a hurry. But it will not be easy for the young lady.”

Lao Peng thanked him and went back to his rickshaw.

They were in a Chinese crowd, with not a Japanese in sight The boy rickshaw puller, like all ihe rickshaw pullers of Peiping, liked to babble as he ran.

“Every day more persons are joining them,” he said. “There must be thousands in the Western Hills. Will you go?” he asked his fellow puller, who was a very old man.

“I am too old,” replied Malin’s puUer. “I was in the Bos:^ War. But I am too old now.”

“Some day I will go. Killing a few Japs makes the heart happy. In the country they cannot do anything to us.”

They now entered the busy streets, and though it was still early for lunch, Lao Peng stopped at a restaurant and dismissed the rickshaws. They went in and asked for a small room.

“We have to spend the day somehow. We might go into a stml) hotel for rest. They would not inspect the hotHs in the daytime. To-night we can go through the gates. We have the password. But we cannot get to the hills to-night, and will have to stop at a village. Do you still think you want to go with me?”

'T must get out of this city, the sooner the better.”'

“It will be a hard journey. You must get a few warm things, a

simple cotton gown to put over your silk gown.”

f'Poya be worried about us. Can we telephone to him?”

“No, it is better not. 'We can post a letter to-night, and by the time he receives it, we be gone.”

They had a light lunch, but Malin could not eat and die in

her neck was aching. Then they went out and bought some clothing for the journey. Lao Peng decided after all they should have blankets, and they bought two, and Malin bought a romrnct and a heavy sweater, and, on Lao Peng’s advice, some soft-soled Chinese shoes.

In a small hotel outside Chienmen they took a room and Lao Peng told Malin to rest, since they might not be able to get to a place for sleep before midnight. His fatherly attitude him seem as kind and solicitous for her comfort as Poya would have been.

Although it was not a cold day, Lao Peng ordered the stove to be lighted. When Malin lay down on the bed to rest, he closed the window and saw that the stove burned properly. As she saw him bending to take up coal to feed it, she was touched and said: “Mr. Peng, you are the kindest man I ever met.”

*T want you to test well,” he urged as he went out and closed the door behind him.

When he returned, Malin had just dozed off. She waked as he entered the door.

“1 have some more things for you.”

Lao Peng unwrapped his parcels. When Malin saw a pair of woollen socks, she laughed. “They are men’s socks. How can I wear them?”

“They will keep you warm.”

“And what is this?”

He took out a pair of quilted leg sheaths, worn both by men and women over the trousers in winter, being tied around the ankles below and laced at the top, with the seats cut away.

“Ate these for yourself or for me?”

'Tor you, of coxirse. Why should I need another pair? With woollen socks and leg sheaths you will be \mm.”

“Oh, Uncle Peng, you are very thoughtful. With these things and that cotton gown, I shall look like a regular peasant woman.”

“You might as well put them on now.”

Malin was very anxious to do as he told her, but she still

temained in the bed. “Give me the gown,” she said. Lao Peng handed het the gown, and she pulled the bed curtain together and began to dress herself in bed. She put on the socks and then the leg sheaths, and then found there was no trouser braid to which to tie the top strings of the leg sheaths since she wore foreign panties.

“Give me my handbag,” she called to Lao Peng, who was

standing beside the window. He saw het white atm outstretched with the emerald bracelet outside the curtain. When he brought her the handbag, she took some safety pins and pinned the leg sheaths.

Lao Peng turned and saw her standing outside the curtain in her jacket and leg sheaths and black socks and cloth shoes. The leg sheaths came only pardy up her thighs and left her pink panties es^osed. She put on her gown quickly and began to walk about.

“Oh, this is nice and warm.”

“Why should women let their legs suffer in silk stockings in winter?” said Lao Peng.

“Now I must write a note to Poya,” she said. “What can I say to put his mind at ease?”

“I cannot advise you on that. Write what you think.”

After sitting at the desk for some minutes, she finished her note which read:

Elder Brother Poya:

' Events happened suddenly and I left without saying good-bye. It was unavoidable and please do not misunderstand In de

journey ahead there will be climbing and crossing, but the dust of the toad will only increase my desire to meet you at Shanghai. I have received hospitality at your home for a month; please thafik your Aunt Lola and the others for me. Sire Peng is a man of austere virtue and has treated me like a relative. I think he is a Liuhsia Huei. My note is short, but my sentiment is long. Please take good care of your jade body. Until we meet again.

Younger Sisler Lien-erh.

Malin showed the note to Lao Peng. When he saw het hand-writing, which was better than that of the average college student, he was surprised. The style was classical, uruike the letters of modem girl students. But when he saw himself referred to as

"Sire" and compared to Liuhsia Hud, the undent saint who was rqputed to be undisturbed when a girl "was sit ting on his lap, he laughed.

"I am not worthy," said Peng.

"That is what Poya said about you," replied Mai in.

Now with the new purchases they found that they had to have a

basket. When all was ready, they went out for dinner and came back to the hotd. Lao Peng went to see the situation at the gate at about seven o’clock and was told that the Japanese had gone.

When he came back with the news, he said: “I don’t know how far we can get with all this luggage, unless we find a carrier on the way. If anybody asks, say you are my niece.”

“1 fed strange. I have never been so heavily padded in the lower parts.” She now had the grey cotton gown over her silk quilted one and looked indeed like a simple poor girl.

Their rickshaws creaked along the dirt streets. At about dght o’clock they reached the gate. The guards at the inner gate had been withdrawn. In the dark they went through a tunnd sixty or seventy feet long. Passing the endosed semidrcular space, they saw five or six guards on duty within the outer gate.

One of the guards advanced and asked: “Where are you going at this time of the day?”

“We are kanbt to the country outside the dty.”

The guard turned a flashlight into Peng’s &ce, then at the Itiggage and at the young girl in the other rickshaw.

“Were you here this morning?”

Lao Peng did not know what to reply and said: "Search the luggage if you like. Weare^*»li/.”

The guard flashed the light at his &ce again, saying: “You must wait a minute . . .” He went away, and after fully five minutes, they saw him coming slowly from the inner gate, carrying a wicket basket, which he set down heavily on the foot space of Peng’s rickshaw.

“What is that?” Peng asked.

“Some rice and vegetables for your friends,” the guard said. ‘Tt is all right. There ate no soldiers ahead.”

Lao Peng thanked hitrij and the rickshaws passed through tibe gate. As soon as he saw t^t there were really no soldiers near by, Peng bent down from his seat and felt the contents of the basket. He touched some cabbage leaves. Then he tried to lift it and

fotuid that it weighed seventy or eighty pounds. With some effort he raised it to his seat, and the rickshaw tilted. He dug his fing e r s into the basket and felt what was surely a package of rifle cart-ridges. The basket must have been left by a guerrilla comrade who was not able to pass through with it in the <uytime. Probably

someone had sent word about his coming.

“What is in that basket?” asked Malin ftom her rickshaw.

“Some rice,” answered Peng. “The guard knows me.” He dared not say more in the presence of the rickshaw pullers.

The road was dark and uneven and the small oil lamps on the shafts of the rickshaws threw confusing shadows of the runners’ legs in ftont. Even at a slow walking pace, the rickshaws bumped and the riders rocked in their seats. There was no wind, but there was a bite in the late autumn ait. Malin smelled the fresh air of the country, clean and wholesome like fresh linen, mingled with the aroma of vegetation and the faint smell of burnt wood in the distance and, at times, the pungent odour of wet soil mixed with animal dimg, made more perceptible by the darkness. Under the faint starlight, Malin could see now and then the dark shapes of tall willows and cottage roofs and the outline of the Western HUls against the sky. She leaned back and looked up and saw the quivering stars in the vast, unobstructed sky which she had so rarely seen in the cities. The night was strange and exciting and beautiful. What she could not understand was why the skyline of the hiUs should be so distinct. The fascination of the open country was upon her.

‘Tt is wonderfull” she exclaimed.

“What is wonderful?” asked Lao Peng who was now ridiag

behind her.

“The country — ^the land, the hills, the stars, the evening

air . . .”

Lao Peng was thinking of what he had seen in tbe country

which she had not seen — ^misery and hunger, suffering and death.

“I thought you might not like it,” he commented simply.

“Why?” said Malin, a little hurt.

“You rich ladies of the dty.”

“I am not a rich Udy.”

“Poya told me you were married.”

“I am married, in a way. . . . Ilefthim.”

“Are you divorced?”

loo

“I didn’t divorce him, and he didn’t divorce me. I ran away.

. . I will tell you later.” ^

It was dMcolt to carry on the conversation sin<vi Malm had to turn her head back to speak to him. The rickshaw pullers were listening. Lao Peng could hear theit heavy breathing. He had been disturbed about the responsibility of Malin, which had been so suddenly thrust upon him, but took it as his duty. He was now also puzzled by Malin as he began to become better acquainted with her.

He could understand why his friend was enrhantpd with her. His maturer eyes could see that she was not merely naive, although she appeared so. He had known many young mpn and women and heard stories of their romances. Young tn^n and women seemed to him filled full of desires and emotions. There was always something pathetic about love and romance — ^the greater the love, the more tragic the romance. This him unusually kind to persons- in love. When he had seen Malin standing before her bed curtain partially undressed he had averted his eyes, not because he was not responsive to the feminine, but because he was, being a man. His mind had rlgRRifipH Aese feminine charms with the desires of the senses, and he saw not a lovely girl before him, but a woman in the abstract. Jfeing a young woman was to be all desire and, emotion, of which a woman’s eyes and voice were the expression. And so when he saw Malin’s bright eyes and heard her pleasing voice, he felt a kind of pity that those eyes and that voice controlled a destiny

that she must live through.

For a while they went in silence; then they heard the sound of hurry^ footsteps ahead, and loud voices, lao Peng, holding the flashlight, turned it on to see what was coming. A group of soldiers seemed' to be mbving in their direction, but the light was weak, and they could not see clearly.

The thump of foosteps became dearer. Were they enemy or firiends? This was supposed to be Japanese-occupied territory.

“It may be our men coming to die dty to make a night raid,” said Malin.

, “Let us hope for the best and be prepared for the worst,” said Lao Peng. “Don’t be afraid. Just' be natural.” But he

was wottyiug about the box of catttidges in his rickshaw.

The sol^ets were now only ten yatds away. Two of them wete pointing tevolvets. “Who is there?” shouted one.

“We are only wayferers,” answered Lao Peng, relieved that the party talked C^ese.

To bis surprise he now saw a man in a black frock, easily disringuishable as a foreigner by his helmet and his spectacles and his beard.

Lao Peng got down and said: “We are all Chinese.”

“WTiere are you going?”

“To the mountains.”

“Password.”

“Kaftk”

Upon this the soldiers put back their revolvers.

“Comrades,” they almost shouted. There were sis of them besides the foreigner, though only two were armed and io uniform.

“Who is this foreigner?” Lao Peng asked.

“He is an Italian priest. We are escorting him back to the city.”

The priest, who looked very tired, spoke in Chmese, with distinct and equally stressed syllables, as foreigners do. *T am a ftiend of the Chinese. We are very good brothers. We are all sons of God.”

He had a very small mouth and looked the voluble type. His reference to the “sons of God” and his foreign accent made the soldiers laugh. Even the rickshaw pullers joined them, and thek ringing laughter was good to heat in the open country at night.

'He is not a bad fellow. We captured him in one of the temples in the country,” said the leader, who seemed to be an educated person. “We are returning him to the city gate because we want to be ftiends with foreigners.”

“How far is the village ahead?”

“Only one Ji ftom here.”

Lao Peng took the leader to the rickshaw and asked bim to lift the basket, and the man understood.

'T am stopping at the village elder’s for the night,” said Lao .Peng. “I cannot carry it up the hiUs myself. Can your men pick it up on the way back?”

“IwilL We will be stopping there for the night, too.”

The soldiers went on toward the city. A&ec passing a small

loa

stone bridge Lao Peng’s party entered the YiUage, where all was quiet. When they canae to the big earthen yard and recogruzcd the

writing on the lintel, they knocked at the door.

An old man came to open the door. His natpR was Li, and he was the elder of the village. He greeted Lao Peng and said he been e:^ectmg them, and the earthen kang was heated.

The rickshaws went away and Lao Peng and MaTi« -virere shown in. The furniture was of the barest.

"The enemy have taken everything they could,” the old tnan explained. “They have burned and broken what they could not take.” An oil lamp stood upon a table-top that seemed to have been part of an old window. On one side of the room was a broad earthen bed, heated in winter &om &e outside, and on it was an old coarse mat and some old quilts.

"Here you will sleep to-night. It is not very comfortable, but it is warm.”

The old man was about sixty, but his fece and hands were well tanned and a thin beard grew bdow his chin. He poured tea from a big earthen pot and o&red it to his guests.

^s she your daughter?” he asked.

Lao Peng said that she was his niece, and asked: “Is it quite safe here?”

■ "Oh, it is safe enough now. The Japs have gone fer south. It was a month ago that they were passmg this way. We are well protected now. Is this not still Chinese soil? Our villagers hatse returned, but I have two sons still in the hills.”

Pointing to an old fowling piece hanging on the wall, Lao Peng asked: "Do you hunt?”

The old man laughed. “I used to, when I was young. But I . killed a Jap with that on September the seventh.”

It \wis already late and they prepared to retire. Malta slept on one side of the kang, Peng slept in the middle, and the old man on the other side. In the duk, talk still went on between the two men.

Malm lay tbifiking of her strange surroundings and all that had happened in the past twenty-four hours. She had lain down without undressing, only taking off her shoes; now she felt too warm and in the dark she sat up to take off her 1^ sheaths and socks. Here she was in a village outside the city and Poya was still in his comfortable home. It was hard to think of Poya because

jverything around her ■was so new to her and he seemed so fat iway. But she knew that here, only a few miles from the city wall jf Peking, the atmosphere had changed completely. There was ! ntr>i»t->i ing exhilarating about what she had seen that night on the road. The rickshaw pullers, the soldiers, and the Italian priest, ind their ringing laughter in the dark, were all so different fiom die whispers and hiding and fears that she had become used to in die city in the past month. And she thought of the ■vast espanse of iTiimmpiring stars in the ftosty sky and the undulating line of the Western Hills. Everything here was big and strong and free, like the soldiers' laughter in the dark.

She -wrapped herself in her blanket, carefully tucking in comets round her hips against the hard earthen bed. Lao Peng was asking how the old man lived and the old man was saying that the people lived on vegetables, that all poultry and pigs had been killed, that mpat -was too expensive, that they wouldn't raise chickens and pigs till next spring. . . .

She dozed off. When the soldiers returned to sleep in the yard she was so soundly asleep that she did not hear them.

CHAPTER Vn

•Raukt-v at daybreak, she was waked by the noises of the soldiers, who were up and ready to start the journey. Lao Peng was already awake and was givmg them the b«ket containing the cartridges. The old man was in die kitchen, cooking some gruel for them.

“The soldiers are starting for the mountains,” said Lao Peng, “and it is good to go with them. They want to carry our luggage. And they know the way; it -will save us time.”

Malin -was putting' on her shoes, and her emerald bracelet clinked against the ka^.

“Hadn’t you better take that bracelet off? It may attract attention.”

*T can’t. It is there for life,” replied Malin.

In the semidarkness she groped for her garments and dressed hastily. She went into the yard buttoning her grey cotton gown

at the doot. Some of the gumillas wete sitting on the ground, tying their sandals; one soldier was tying his puttee, and

the leader, was standing up performing the unnatnrgT task of tacking his bulging Chinese jacket inside his army breeches.

''Where did you sleep last night?" asked Malin.

"Just in the yard, hmang. ''J^ere else?" one rq)lied.

"Are you not tired — waMng all day yesterday and getting'up so early?"

This brought laughter ftom the guerrillas. "That is notibing," said the leader, still ^ing to squeeze his thick under jacket inside his breeches. Pointing to his companion in uniform, he said: "This fellow has walked six thousand miles, all the way frr>m Kiangsi, to the border of Tibet, and up to the North-west with the Eighth Route Army."

"Axe your legs made of iron?"

The soldier, agreeably flattered by the pretty girl, smilffd childishly. "To be a revolutionist, one has first to train the body," he said. "Sometimes we had to carry the sick and wounded on stretchers up the mountain paths. A sHp of ihe foot and down you went to a bottomless pit, together with the sick person you wete carrying."

"A revolutionist does not brag," said the leader good-humouredly, and the soldier was abashed, like a child.

After a light breakfast, they started on their way. The mnming air was keen and ftesh, and the eastern sky became brighter every second, changing the hues of the hillsides before them. Malih found the pace rather fest, but she was small and her soft-soled shoes and her leg sheaths tied around the ankles helped her to walk comfortably on me stony toad.

They tested at a village, where the villagers seemed to know the guerrillas well and offered them tea and wheat cakes. After thanking theft hosts, they started again and crossed a railway and reached the foothills. For a quarter of a mile they went over what seemed to be a dried-up river-bed, where the going was diflScult, but the guerrillas in theft sandals leaped ftom stone to stone with the luggage. Then they feUowed a path through many lulls unril they came to a temple Iridden deep in the mountain range.

It was about ten o’clock when Aey arrived. The big hall of the temple was full of people. A politicd training class was going on, and a &t young girl student in bobbed haft and grey uniform was

standing in jEcont of a gilt bnddha, giving a lecture. The crowd was in the usual blue peasant dress and £ax from orderly. "Mony squatted on the ground and sqme stood against pillars and walls,

Tlie girl seemed to be e:q)ert at talking to peasant crowds. Hei voice was loud and coarse, but when she said, “cut the com-munications,” she pronounced the words so forcefully that the\ seemed really to cut imagmary railways, telegraphs, and tele phones. She spoke with a masculine force that swept the audiena with her.

There were many boy and girl students in the yards and corridors or walking hand in hand under the trees. Their feces were gay, and their manners were so boisterous that they would have been almost exasperating to a civilized conununity. 'Iheit dress was a curious mixture of modem innovations and rustic simplicity, partly military and partly civilian, partly Western and partly Qhdnese, so that the first effect was one of confusion, particularly as to sex. The young men wore shirts, shorts, and leather shoes. Some girls were in caps and cotton uixifotms with bulging pockets, and puttees and sandals. Others were in the school dress of khaki blouse and black cotton skirt coming to the knee, with gartered socks and cloth shoes. A few were still in their long gowns. Malin saw a pair of young people sitting on a rock deep in discussion. Another boy was playing a harmonica. A girl’s bobbed hair would slip out from below her cap, and a fountain-pen would be sticking out of her breast pocket. Another girl was wearing a wrist-watdi, along with straw sandals and a broad-brimmed peasant hat. It was bewildering, incredible, as of a generation tom from its home surroundings and uprooted from social tradition, escaping from personal destinies, driven by some private circumstance or urged by a high and noble ideal to build

up a new life upon this universe, come together here to seek freedom of the spirit. Everything was direct, simple, practical, and reasonable. ' irobbed hair was not merely a bob, but was hair cut short for practical convenience. They were starting life anew as if human civilization had not existed before — except for their flashlights and fountain-pens. They dressed as they pleased and thought what they liked and said what they thought. If it ms freedom of the spirit they were seeking, they had found it

Malta and Lao Peng were taken to a room in the temple, which was the office of the local headquarters. A table and a few wooden

st6ols stood beside a camp cot. A tali man with a tanned £ace, looking about thirty, stood up to greet them. Malin thought him rather young for his evident position of authority.

"Comrade Peng, you have helped us a great deal. What ate your plans?”

Lao Peng told him, and the officer told them that thae was severe figliting down both railways, but promised to look into the matter.

He sat dovra again with the air of a man occupied vrith a big

more concerned with his own plans than with the personal problems of the guests before him. "The enemy are going down the two railways," he explained. "They will occupy the arteries, and we must be the capillaries to suck the blood out of them. Wherever the enemy go, there we go. In feet, it is easier to the people in th,e country after the enemy are in the towns after they have seen their beastliness. Thatismyeq>erience."

He spoke with calm confidence, yet without the usual ak of an army officer. In his cotton uniform, without badges of rank, he looked like a peasant. Now he seemed to relax and looked « A/faltn and said: "Why do you want to go to Shanghai? It is fnnrb more interesting out here."

"But I have to meet a relation in Shanghai. How do we go?"

"On your legs," he replied with a laugh. 'Tf you are lu^, we may be able to capture an enemy horse for you. You may have to wait here a few days. We have parties going down south epn-stantly. Meanwhile, you can stay in the room with the other gkls. I will take you to Miss Li. There— they are smgmg now."

Mao, the young officer, came out with them through the yard toward the rnain ball. The crowd was singing a war song..

"What is it they are sin g ing?"

"That is the 'Guerrilla Song,' " answered Mao. "It is one of the

first things we teacih our men.” He pointed to liie leader and said:

“There is Miss Li.”

When they had entered half an hour ago, the girl lea<to ^
turned to look at Malin, but now she was ^eedng the singing,
then in ftiU swing. The men seemed to be enjoying it heartily. But
now many turned to look at the pretty girl standi n g near th^n, ^d
the song almost stopped, with only a few in the ftont still singing.

Miss Li banged the table with what seemed to be a drumrstick
used by the monks.

“What is the matter?” she shouted.

Now there was a complete stop. The men looked from Malin
to their teacher, who pounded the table again and again.

*‘Now begin again. Get the words right. Ifwe hope no food ”

‘ ‘ ‘The enen^ wnl supplj us” roared the men.

“If we have no gm ”

“The enen^ will make them for us”

“Now begin again.”

This time they sang more lustily than ever. When the song was finished. Miss Li said in her coarse and rather masculine voice: “Before I dismiss you, I will ask you a few questions of what you learned to-day and yesterday. What ate we fighting for?”

“Defending our country,” the men shouted.

“How old is our country?”

“Four thousand years.”

“What are we fighting against?”

There were shouts of “Japan” and “East-Ocean Devils.”

Miss Li seemed dissatisfied. One man squatting in front cried out: “Japanese impetialisml” and received a nod from the teacher.

“Yes, Japanese imperialism,” she repeated. But there were murmurs among the class whiA showed that they had not quite understood.

“What must we do when the enemy attack?”

“Retreat.”

“What must we do when the enemy retreat?”

“Attack.”

“When only must we attack?”

“By surprise with superior numbers.”

“\S^t is our most important principle?”

“0)-operate with the people.”

“How can China witj?”

“By cutting the communications.”

“One more qtzestion. Am I your teacher?”

“No, you ate our comrade.”

^e dass was dismissed and aU seemed like happy children.

Mss Li turned to the guests, and Lao Peng and Malin were

introduced and the conunander told Miss Li to show Malin hef

They had supper early. Sitting beside Malin was a very quiet girl, evidently ftom the country, who spoke in a northern accent. When Malin asked where was her home, she simply said that she came from the neighbourhood of Tientsin. This gitl was going to share her bed with Malin . She had a round &ce, somewhat tanned, and in her dark eyes there was an eager, hungry look. She wore an old peasant jacket, showing her arms of firm red flesh, and could certainly not be a student. None of the other girls talked with her, and M ali n , a little uncomfortable herself in the new company, preferred to speak with her.

After supper she asked if they could go on a walk together. A paved walk led down from the temple to a by-path and a clump of trees near a clear space. Wandering along the path, they came to a rock where they sat down.

“What is your name?” Malin asked.

‘Tfumei.”

“My name is Malin. Are you joining the guerrillas?”

“I think so.” Her tone was uncertain.

“How did you happen to come here?”

“It was by accident. I had nowhere else to go. The Japs.” She

spoke the last word with unusual emphasis. “And why did you come here?”

“The Japs, too,” answered Malin. “Tell me how you came?”

"I was running away firom Tientsin with my uncle. We were coming along the Great Wall, and one of the guerrillas yt^s recruiting and my uncle joined them. He was sent to Kuan and I haven’t heard from him since. It is three weeks already. Probably he was killed.”

^How old are you?”

^‘Twenty-one.”

“You are not married, are you?”

The gM nodded.

“Where is your husband?”

“He was killed by the devils.”

“In battle?”

“No. I was married only a month. In July the Japs were in our village. One of the soldiers came in . . . that kind of shame.” The gkl blushed and Malin understood. “My husband tried to

save noe and he was stabbed to death.”

“How did you escape?”

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"The devil left . . . afterwards. I wanted to die, but my unde said my husband was the only heir of the femily, and he have a son.”

After a long while, she asked suddenly: "Do you know if one can tell? I have spoken of this to nobody but you.”

"TeUwhat?”

"Tell a devil baby from a Qunese baby.”

Suddenly the girl broke down and cried hysterically; "Om one tell . . . ? Ifonlyoneissure . . . I shall torture him — ^myGod, how I shall torture him! Or if one cannot tell, it is better to have this child unborn.”

The gid’s body was shaking and her eyes were wild. “What can I do?” she repeated. "But if it is his child, it’s the only thing I have left in this world.*’

Malin felt powerless to give comfort or even a reasonable answer. "Were you expecting the child before the beast came?”

"No, but how could I tell? It was our honeymoon.” The girl went on more calmly. *‘But if it is a beast of a child, I shall know.”

"You know how your husband looked. If the child is like your husband, you wiU know it is his seed. You must be patient.”

“If it isn’t, do you think I would nurse a devil’s chil d?”

"You must not worry. Such an abnormal act carmot produce a child. A child is conceived only when the jw and the yawg come together.”

“Are you sure? Have you had a child?”

"Yes. It is true, you cannot conceive unless thej'/» and the_y<w»g act together. If you are expecting a child, believe me, it is the child of your wedlock.” Malin spoke rather with a desire to allay her fears than with inwrd belief.

The girl’s fece dbanged and lightened, as if she were relieved, but stfll seeking more assurance.

"You loved your husband, didn’t you?” said Malin, gently.

‘ “How could you ask such a question? I was a bride. Did you ever know of a bride and bridegroom not being good to each other in the first month?” The girl’s eyes, which had been wild and distended, for the moment became tender with thought.

Telling Malin her secret and finrling her responsive and sympathetic, the girl began to feel dependent on her. “You are leaving us,” she said, suddenly.

no

‘‘Yes, for the south.”

“Let me go with you.”

Malin forgot her own tcoubles. ‘1 am travelling with Mr. Peng, a wonderfully kind man. But we are going to Shanghaij and we have to go through the fighting area. Are you not a&aii?”

“What have I to be afiraid of, in my condition? Death would be aneasy way out.”

“Don’t say thatl” cried Malin. “I don’t know when we ate going to start. It may be in a few days. If you really \ 0 ant to go with us, I will talk to Mr. Peng.”

The girl now realized that she was speaking to one who had been a total stranger to her only one hour ago, and, seeing Malm’s Ijeauty and her superior dress, almost regretted wl^t she had said.

“Oh, you are one of the lucky people,” she said. “You have relatives and money. I am just a poor country girL”

Malin looked at her softly. “Lucky, did you say? Wait until I tell you my own story.”

The sun was setd^ and the girl said they must return to the temple, for there was no light in the room and Yumei said Miss Li would scold them if they were late.

"Are you afraid of Miss Li?”

“Yes, she scolds people. She does not understand me and blames me for not being cheerful,”

“Didn’t you tell her your story?”

“Why should I tell her? I dare not let her see my wet eyes.”

So it was with a new understanding that the two lay down.m bed that night. There were four girls sharing two beds in a small room. In the darkness they undressed and 1& their things as best they could. The other girls were students and each had her lover and they were talking happily about love and literature and the

war. Malinand Yumei lay quietly and only whispered.

“I don’t understand them,” wluspered Yumei. “Can you read and write?”

"Yes.”

“What are they saying?”

“They are taMng now about women’s rights in the modem world.”

Yumei could not understand what "women’s tights” meant, and she was quiet for a while. But when the other girls *had stopped talking, she whispered to Malin.

IXI

“Ate you awake?”

“I can’t sleep.”

Yumei took Malm’s Imd and laid it on her belly. “Do you think it is three ot four monfihs? This is October. I was in the end of June. Was it like this when you had a child?”

*1 cannot tell," whispered Malin. "But do not worry, It is his child, I am sure."

They both pretended to be asleep, but neither slept. Malta lay and tried to collect the confusing impression of the day and th pn tried not to think of them, but of Poya. The story of the girl had disturbed her, and memories of her own life came back like an unbelievable dream. Then she heard the girl weeping beside her. She understood now the wild look in her eyes.

"You must take good care of yourself," said Malm lightly. But now she knew that she could not leave this helpless girl alone.

The nest morning, Malin told Lao Peng about Yumei and introduced her to him, and he took it as a matter of course that, if the girl wanted to go with them, he could not deny her his help, and said that he womd speak to the commander about it.

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After luncheon, Malia went with Lao Peng to see the officer.

**1 have been looking into this matter for you," he said. "The Japanese are driving south along the two railways. There is ' severe fighting and Aere are many Japanese soldiers between the two railways. We have our guerriilas organized all through the

area. If you were travelling done it would be quite simple, but

with a young lady like this one ” The oflSicer looked toward

Mdiu. .

“Yes, I am responsible for her safety,” sdd Lao Peng.

“You would run into real fighting around Tehdiow, and I hardly think the railway below,will be open for civilians, ’^y don’t you go by road to Tientsin and then take a boat? There are fewer Japanese in that direction now. I can arrange for mules or donkeys, and I will give you papers for passing through our area. At each important stop we can supply guides for you. It is a safer and much quicker route.”

The officer’s tone was sincere. Lao Peng looked at Malin, for she had told him she would not go again into an occupied dty.

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“I am not a&aid of fighting,” said Malin. “How long will it take if we avoid Tientsin?”

“Who can tell?” said Lao Peng. "For myself, it does not matter, for I am going inland anyway. You want to reach there as soon as possible, don’t you?”

Malm nodded.

“Then let us go by road to Tientsin. It will take only two or three days.”

Her objection seemed overcome, but she felt embarrassed to be taking him out of his way. “How would you be going if I did not come with you?” she asked.

“Down the railway straight to Hankow. Out armies will soon be retreating firom the Shanghai area. But now it is my duty to take you to Shanghai.”

“Will you speak to him about Yumei?” Malin whispered.

Lao Peng turned again to the officer. “There is a girl who wants to come with us. Chn this be done?”

“What is her name?”

''Yumei. She is friendless here.”

The officer thought for a moment. “I am responsible to her unde if he returns. But probably he is dead.”

“Please, Commander Mao,” Malin began.

“Comrade Mao,” the officer corrected her.

"Comrade Mao, she is sick and unhappy here. I cannot leave her hae like that,” pleaded Malin.

But the officer said: ‘Tm aficaid I cannot p ermit it. Her unde may come and ask for her.”

They went back and told Yumei about the officer’s dedsion. She broke into hysterical weeping, and when she heard that thq' were going to Tientsin, she said that she knew the way and perhaps could even see her own village.

“There may be no one in your village now,” said Lao Peng.

"It does not matter. Laqyeby siMcbieb, let me foEow you wherever you go.”

Toucdied by her tears, Lao Peng said to her: “Come and see the commander with me. If you cry as hard before him, he may give his consent.”

When she wept again and pleaded, the officer said: ‘Tf your unde returns, wlut am I to say?”

Yumei stopped crying and said with the stubbornness of a

peasant woman who has made up her mind: "Even if my unde returns, he cannot support me.”

Lao Peng took the oflBcer aside and told him the girl’s condition. "She needs someone to care for her, or she whl become desperate.”

"And you are going to take cate of her &om now on?” tlje officer asked.

"I will sign a paper if you like,” Lao Peng said.

So Lao Peng signed a paper, and Yumei signed another, but, being unable to write her name, she was made to hold the pen and put a cirde around the name they wrote for her.

"This is right, I think,” said the officer. “We are all refugees an3rway. She is lucky to have you to look after her. More probably than not, her unde is dead. I can give you only two donkeys. Some of you will have to walk.”

'T can walk,” said Yumei, her eyes now bright with a snule that

was almost beautiful. "Let me thank you.”

“I will have a guide and animals ready for you to-morrow at daybreak,” said the officer in a tone which conduded the interview.

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Leaving Yumei alone but now happy, Malin and Lao Peng went out for a walk. The sun was bright, but the moimtain air was pleasantly cool. They strolled out ftom the gate of the temple and down the paved steps.

' Thinking about Yumei, Malin said: “We could not leave her. What has happened to her has happened to hundreds of our women.”

am glad that you want to take her,” said Lao Peng. **! didn’t really know you.”

"We don’t know each other well yet, do we?” Malin said with a thoughtful smile.

His minH stopped for a moment to analyse her. Her beauty, on the night Poya brought her to his house, had dazzled him a little. But Lao Peng was not young, and to him beauty in a woman was superficial and remote, besides being a screen of protection,

guarding the approach to the inner self. The first da3rs foUowiig a first meeting, he thought, are the hardest test for a beautmd woman. That is when we discover the little flaws, a laugh or a mannerism that detracts ftom the first perfect vision, when we ate

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more critical and less unreserved admirers of a woman of glamour. We usually revise our opinion of a woman on the third day; some come down a little and others go up in out scale. It is those transient moods and expressions, cas^ and intimate, something transpiring in time, rather than the proportions of a fece — a voice, a bit of laughter, a hardly perceptible curve of the lip — which decide whether we are going to Uke a woman a little more or a little less. Malin, travelling witia him in this mountain region, dressed in cotton, had survived these tests well. She seemed light-hearted and naive, with a suggestion of abandon. She had not the reserve of well-bred girls, and yet when she spoke to Yumei her voice was warm and rich and tender, which made Lao Peng like her. He felt also the sense of illusion of which Poya had spoken. Perhaps it was because he knew almost nothing about her. The wind blew her hair across her fece and she stopped to adjust it.

“Is Poya your best feiend?” she asked, slipping her hand into his ai~m. Her voice was warm and intimate. “You are his best

feiend. He told me.”

“I suppose so.”

“What do you think of him?”

“I til ink he has a very brilliant mind, fer above the average.” Then he added: 'Tt is a pity that he and his wife do not get along together.”

“She should just adore and worship such a husband,” said Malin enthusiastically.

“He has his feults. He has not been devoted to her as a man should be to his wife.”

“I know. His-aunt Lola told me. But that is always the.wife’s feiilt, don’t you think?”

Lao Peng said suddenly and directly: “Do you think you are doing right to take him away from his wife?”

Malin drew her hand away. “He told me you approved,” she said briefly.

“I do, under the circumstances,” he answered. “Otherwise I would not be faking charge of you. I was asking whether you had thought it out for yourself. We must always be sure that what we

are doing is tight, mustn’t we?”

^‘Being rightl” Malin exclaimed somewhat impatiently. “It is always so confusing to be right. Sometimes you think you are

doing tight and people say you are wrong.. Sometimes you are so confused that you want to do wrong to be sure you are doing tight. I haven’t spoken about this to Poya. But you ate kind, and I can speak ofit to you. . . . Am I a bad woman?”

The question was abrupt and unsuspected. Lao Peng paused to look at her.

"my?” he asked.

“Am I bad because Poya likes me — ^because men usually like me?”

“There is no bad person in this world,” said Lao Peng. ""Thete is no bad man and there is no bad woman. We must not judge, I suppose people would say you were bad if you took Poya from his wtfe.”

Malin felt now that if anybody would understand her, Lao Peng

would. She felt at ease with him as she was not with Poya. Poya might criticize her, but Lao Peng never. She wanted to speak, yet she felt tremulous inside.

“I suppose Poya told you about me?” she began.

■ “No — only that he admires you — ^greatly.”

‘"What did he say he admires in me?”

""That you are sweet and innocent . . .”

She laughed. "*1 told him I was untried.”

Malin guided Lao Peng to a shady comer, out of fhe way, under a clump of trees.

“Uncle Peng, let’s sit down,” she said affectionately. ""I want to tell you something before I tell him. You are kind and you will understand. I am not sweet and innocent. Before, I didn’t care what I was. Now I do — very much. It worries me that Poya might misunderstand. May I tell you?”

“Of course.”

She asked Lao Peng to sit down frest, and he obeyed. Then seating herself on a rock next to him, she began haltingly. “You must not look at me while I speak. . . . Wb^ do you think of a

woman who has lived with several men?”

""Why, that depends,” said Lao Peng.

""If a man loves a woman and she has lived with other toen
before, does that make any difference?”

""Some men don’t like it. You cannot generalize.”

“Do you think it would make any diffsrence to Poya if he knew
I have lived with other men?”

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Lao Peng, bending his head and listening intently, mecely said:
“You mean because you have been marriH before?”

^“No, not exactly t]^t ... I have been a kept woman.”

She stopped again and stole a glance at Lao Peng’s serious &ce.
Then she suddenly spoke earnestly. ‘‘Yes, Uncle Peng, I was a
kept woman. Do men despise kept women?” He shook his head.
“Well, all women do. All women want to be properly married.
But sometimes they cannot be. My first marriage did not tnm out
well, and I had to run away. My mother-in-law gave me six
hunted dollars and told me to go away. What was I to do? I

went to Tientsin with that six hundred dollars and worked in a dance hall. I had to make a living. It was natural and easy for a young girl. I was tired of marriage, I had my admirers, I was successml, and I did not try to find other work. I didn't have to know anything, to learn anything, just to be young and not unattractive, and that was all men wanted in a Ha-ncing partner. I had to smile and put on a pleasant £a.ce — but that was part of the job. A girl working in a dance hall is like a piece of public property. She has to dance with any man who buys a ticket. Dancing was easy for me— they said I was a good d^cer and I made twice the money the other girls made. . . . But I hated it. Then someone began giving me money and sending me presents and then he persuaded me to give up dancing and live with him. Uncle Peng, should you say that was wrong?"

"I should say that it was natural," he said gravely.

"I used to dread certain types of men, so t^t after a dance I felt I wanted to scrub myself clean witi a brush. And the silly jokes I had to listen tol So I consented."

"Did you love him?"

"No, but he was pleasant and very dean and I liked him. I enjoyed a sense of privacy, as if my body was again my own. It was like a vacation, or like a kind of promotion. He gave me everything I wanted. It was the first time I had fidt as if I were rich, and happy with myself. He was very kind to me until his

wife found a cheque he wrote to me, and then he had to leave me. I cannot tell you me insults the wife said to me.”

“What did you do then?”

“Well, I had to make a living. One thing led to another. I was always lucky. They were aU kind, but no one could marry me. They were ^ married. But it was always easy, and I had a gocxi

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ritnft. Yet I was never satisfied, for I began to want to be properly married. Some men would take me out, and some would not Men would take their wives anywhere, but would not take their mistresses, no matter how much they said they loved them. One day it came to me that a mistress was like a chaufieur, but a wife was like an owner-driver. Who wouldn’t want to own the car she was driving . . . ? I enjoyed shopping for a man, buying socb and handkerchiefs and ties, thinking that I was buying them for my husband. Then I would suddenly realize he was not my husband, not mine for ever. They say a mistress works for money. But all men tell me that they care more for their mistresses t^ for their wives, and sometimes the mistress cares more, too. I was confused. A wife is protected for life and shares her husband’s property and is not regarded as working for pay. A mistress gets much less rkan the wife and is called a gold-digger, no matter how

much she loves the man . . .”

She paused, and as Lao Peng said nothing, she went on fluently. “Then I had a baby. It looked as ifthis time it was going to be permanent. I nursed my baby and said to myself: ‘This is a home. I am a mother like any other mother.’ But the little thing died after two months. Then I didn’t care any more. I tortured myself and I tortured him. . . . And so he left me too. ... Do you see, I wanted a home of my own, like any other woman? I was young and I must find a man before it was too late. ... I had one more chance, a young man who was madly in love with nae. He wanted to marry me and he could have made me happy. But he had been betrothed by his parents. He told his parents ^ about me and said that he wanted to break the engagement. The fiancdd’s fluxdly heard about it and the fiancde, a very common girl, came with her mother to plead with me. If I had been hard* hearted, I could have forced my will and won. The man wanted me and not her. But the girl looked so pitiftil and her mother begged and w^t and said that their mnily, which was well known, would lose fiice if the engagement was broken, and I yielded and told my young man to marry her.”

Again she stopped and looked at Lao Peng.

“Now you know all of it. Does it change your opinion of me?”

“Not at all. Did you have no relatives to help you, advise

you?”

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“Not after my mother died. Tell me, Unde Peng, when a woman loves a man with her whole heart, does it matter what she has done before?”

Lao Peng turned his head to look at her and saw her face bent, tender and ennobled with passion. And he felt pity for her and his voice was tender.

“Not in the least,” he said.

“I want to think that it makes no difference, that I can give Poya a pure love, a true love. Do you understand a woman's heart, how she wants to do everythiag, to give everything to make a man happy when she loves? Isn’t that love sufEdent?”

^Tt is suffident. I understand you, and so will Poya. His parents are dead and he is of an independent mind. I do not think his relatives can influence him. The important thing is not to make him think you are marrying him for his wealth.”

“His wealth?” said Malin, tossing her head sharply in surprise. ‘*Who said I wanted his w^th?”

“No one. But people might say it.”

“What do I care what people say?”

“That is right,” said Lao Peng, relaxing with a smile. “You must never doubt each other. "Ihat will be proof of your love. I think, Malin, in spite of all you say, that you are still a young and very innocent girl. You do not know the world yet. I hope you will keep this childish heart.”

“I suppose,” said Malin meditativdy, “even after we are married, people will talk. How I hate women’s gossipl”

“You don’t like women?”

“1 am a woman myself. But how I hate wives! I have seen a few and seen their wicked smiles and their horrified looks at me. Am I so diflerent fcom them, except that they have parents to make good matches for them? What business is it of theirs if a man and a woman love each other and want to live with each other?”

“Women never like a pretty woman,” said Lao Peng. *‘But you must also see society’s point of view. Marriage is romance, but it is also business, security, and the raising of children. Wives take that businesslike point of view on marriage.”

“That is what I hate,” said Malin vehemently. ‘Ts there not somewhere a man and woman who love each other can go and be alone and be happy together?”

“Like a pair oi birds,” commented Lao Peng.

“Yes, like a pair of birds. Why are women so petty?”

“Why are men too so petty? You are young, you do not know the cruelty of man to nian. You do not know what suffering and tragedy exist inland at this very moment. Think of Yumei. Who has done this thing to her? A man, a fellow human being. But we can comfort her a little, make her a little happier.”

The slow, sad voice of Lao Peng and the deep sincerity of his tone recalled to Malin that she had been thinking only of her own happiness. Here was a generous soul who was thinking of others too.

“I don’t wonder that Poya admires you so. Uncle Peng. It would be wonderful if we three could go on together and be friends for life.”

She rose and he rose too, and again she slipped her hand into

his arm.

“I don’t know what I shall do if I lose Poya. Do you think I should tell him everything?”

“Tell him everything. He will understand.”

They came up to the paved steps again. Lao Peng saw that his shoe-lace was loose again, and stooped to tie it.

“Let me do it,” Malin said warmly, and she went down on her knees. Lao Peng saw her bending before him, her pretty white fingers deftly making a knot, and then making it very secure with a second knot.

-Rising, she said, “I teach you a trick. , After tying the first knot, take any two opposite ends and tie another knot, and it will never come loose.”

“How did you learn this?”

“One of the rAen showed it to me,” she answered, blushing.

Lao Peng was grave and a little troubled. In spite of his liberal views, he did stop thinking of Malin as a girl ftom a good femily. When she bent to tie his shoe-lace, she seemed also affectionate. Lao Peng was a man, and his asceticism was due to inhibitions and the force of habit, not to atrophy of the senses. He had never

been tempted by women because he had fortified himself by always looking upon women impersonally. But Malin had opened up the secrets of her body to mm, and he could no longer look upon her impersonally. T^e intimacy and confidence with which she had spoken made bier dose to him. He caugftt himsdf

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thinking, “No wonder Poj^ is in love with her. She is so sweet and warm.” But the force of habit was strong in and he found himself under the obligation to take her to Shanghai for Poya. The attitude dictated by old tradition was that “a friend’s wife should never be taken advantage of.” He could not let any other thought enter his mind. So he talked of things;

“Have you ever ridden on a donkey?”

“No. It will be fun,” smiled Mglin

'^ell, it will not be hard. I suppose we ate to travel as peasants.”

“Yumei wHl be a great help. She will be going to her own village, in case people should ask us.”

“Yes, if we get a chance to explain. And you?”

“We can go as her relatives. You can be her &ther and I her sister.”

“That is not easy. Anybody can see at a glance that you ate not from the country. I wotdd be relieved if you were not a woman.”

“Can I disguise myself?”

“I don’t see how you can do it with your bgir and your stnal] face.”

'*1 have an id^,” exclaimed Malin. “You pose as a merchant going to Tientsin, and I as your son — and Yumei will be out servant. I will tuck in my hair under one of those rail northern fur-lined caps, and pull the daps down low. Perhaps you could get one for me from the men here.”

CHAPTER Vin

The next morni ng they were up early and met at the temple gate. The guide and two donkeys were standing ready below the temple wall. The officer was there talking to Lao Peng when Malin came with Yumei catling her suitcase in one hand and her own bedding bundle in the other. At the sight of Malin in a fur cap, with the flaps turned down behind her ears, they both laughed. She had not made up her fece, but still her complexion was

smooth and she looked like a child in a man’s dress. The grey cotton gown could be worn by man or woman, but her

■well-developed hips marked her as a ■woman, especially because she stood very erect.

"How do I look?” she asked, smiling.

‘Xike a rich man’s youngest son,” said Lao Peng. "I suppose you will pass feirly well.”

Yumei was busy packing things on one of the donkeys. Het arms and legs were Aose of a country woman used to work, fitm and tanned and solid, and her movements were quick as she helped to secure the luggage with a rope.

ihe officer gave Lao Peng road directions. “Go by the hills until you come out at the Longevity Bdll of the Summer Palace. Do not go to'wards the city, but strike east and cross the rail^way somewhere neat the college, then go east and south. Avoid the main road but keep dose to it. Cross the road at dusk, and stop at Matouchen for the night. It is easy walking on level country all the way, after you leave the Summer Palace. There are not many Japanese on this part of the road. But when you get neat-

Hosi-wu, you must be mote careful. The guide will take you to our man there. We may be planning counter-attacks from there. But you will be with our o’wn men all the way.” Then he asked the guide to bring back any message from his men at Hosi^wu. *Tf it is an urgent message, send it by relay,” he added.

“What relay?” asked Lao Peng.

“We have a perfect courier system. A message can co'ver fifty miles in twenty-four hours. A special stick goes ■with the message, indicating the hour it must arrive at a certain place, and it always does. Village volunteers relay it from town to to^wn.”

Now all ■was ready, and Malin was helped to mount the unladen donkey. Lao Peng and Yumei ■walked, the latter carrying a stnali doth pared, containing her little dothing and a comb, which, besides the old ragged bedding, was all she had.

They began to descend the paved steps. Malin, feeling the •wriggling back of the donkey under her as it picked its ■way on the sHppery cobblestones, fdt a little afraid and shifted more and more to the fironf until she rested on the shoulders of the scoall animal.

"Oh, I’m going to fell,” she cried.

She had put on her leg sheaths, but now her thighs showed.

■"The donkey never slips on rocky roadsl” said Lao Peng. “But you must sit further bade — and cover yourself.”

dancing, he saw her smiling to somebody, and saw a girl seated on the inside row watching them and s miling back. The girl was in white, her face was full, and her lips heavily rouged. She looked a litde older than Tanni.

"Who is that?” asked Poya.

"An old friend of mine. I knew her when I was a danring girl at Tientsin.”

After the dance, Tanni went to the girl and invited her to their table, and introduced her to Poya as hCss Yen, and said her name was Siangyun. She was one of the dancing hostesses in this place.

While the two women were talking and laughing as old firiends, Poya watched Siangyun. She looked about twenty-eight and might be thirty-two and had the air of a mature woman. Despite her dress he judged by the way she held her cigarette and by her generally quieter movements that she had come firom an old social background. Her hair was done in the impeccable old feshion, combed straight back to a glossy finish and gathered in a low-

hanging, neaSy braided, carefully padded coil behind her neck —
a task of hairdressing that usually took one or two hours. Two
tiny jasmine flowers were thrust in above the coifiure. Her voice
had the soft coarseness of a woman who has not slept enough.
The flesh below her temples covered well her rather high
cheekbones.

Poya, interested in her, said, "This place is stifling hot. Shall
we ask her to our rooms, so that you can have a good talk
together?”

Poya bought ten dollars’ worth of tickets for Siangyun, so that
she could leave the hall, and they went to his hotel. When
Siangyun called her ftiend "Malta” she was told that her name
had been changed and that she was called ‘Tanni” now. She
whispered to Tanni about the story which had appeared in a
Shanghai tabloid paper, and Tanni told her that she had run
away, but that the story was distorted. “Mr. Yao knows all
about it,” she said.

"Mr. Yao,” said Siangyun, "she was always a lucky girl. She
was easily the most popular dancer. Of course she was young
then, but even after these years she is as pretty as ever. A person
like me remains in the old rut. What can I look forward to?
I shall soon be a ‘half-old Madame Hsu’?”

"Don’t disparage yourself,” said Tanni

‘•No, my days ate done. My son -will never come back. I am only waiting for my coflSn, and then I will die. Can I have a good, strong co£^ for a hundr^ dollars? I dare not hope for a good one like those over there, but I want it to be of i^d wood. It need not be very big, but when I see it I shall die in peace.”

She handed the package to Lao Peng and said: “You count it There must be tmee hundred dollars. My eyes can’t see any more.”

He counted the notes. Most of them were issued in the tkoe of the Peking Regime, and were entirely T^ueless now, but he did not tell her so.

“It is correct. Three hundred dollars.”

“Will you buy a good coffin for me to-day? I want to see it One hunted or one hundred and twenty dollars will do it. Then give twenty-five dollars to any one who will wash my body and comb my hair for the burial. This dress I have is old now. me a dress, yes, a silk dress, and silk skirts and a pair of new shoes. I have never worn silk in all my life. My litde body does not require a very big silk dress now. Will you do this for me?”

“Of course, if it is your wish. I will buy them for you to-day,” replied Lao Peng. Then he said: “Dp you want monks to say prayers for you?”

‘ ‘No,” said the old woman. “The Buddha did not help me to find my son. Spend some twenty dollars on my burial. I like the .view on the hill here, so just have a grave dug in the neighboll^ hood. And I shall thank you and the Sister Goddess of Mercy fin: giving me a peaceful place to die in.”

She vras panting, but she went on. “I don’t want to be a burden to you or to anybody. Take this money and give me a decent burial. There may be a hundred and fifty dollars left over. Keep them for my son if he comes back.”

“Who is your son and where is he?”

“His name is Chen San. I don’t know where he is. 1 have been looking for him these many years, and he never came hack to Ms old mother. I lost him when he ^was a boy of sixteen. When the Manchu Empire fell, the revolutionists took him away.”

“How old is he?”

“He must be over forty now. Perhaps he is a fether now. Ot perhaps he is dead, else he would have come back to his mothet I saved this money for him, coin by coin, copper by copper, vddk

I was waiting for him to come back. If he comes, give the rest of the money to him. Give him my mother’s love and tell him that I left some dothing for him— with the Third Daughter of Yao &mily in Peking — ^years ago.”

^*^51iich Yao family of Peking?” asked Tanni, suddenly interested.

‘ ‘They lived at the Prince’s Garden, and I was working for the T bird E)aughter of the family.”

“How many years ago was that?” ’ ‘

“It must have been twenty yeairs now,” she said, and could speak no mote.

Lao Peng had met Chen San only a year ago and had heard faom Poya the famous story of the lost son, whose mother had been working with the Yao family. He had heard how this woman worked and sewed at night to make dothing for her son in case she should ever find him, and how once every month, she asked leave and took the new ^thing under her arm and roamed the streets of Peking, stopping young men and soldiers in the hope of finding her son, and how she always came back sad and dis-appointed, and how one day, when soldiers filled the dty, she was sure her son had returned and took leave of her mistress and

disappeared, and never returned. Later, Chen San had come back and married the sister of Kung Lifh, Mochow's husband.

But Lao Peng bad no idea where these were now, and he knew only they had joined the guerrillas fighting m Shansi. He talked in whispers with TannL

"We must send a telegram to Po]ta," said Tanni. "But teU her first. It may make her want to live."

Lao Peng turned to the old woman and said: "We know the Yao family of Peking. Old Grandmother, you must not die."

But the old woman could not hear very well.

"Your son came back and was married," shouted Tanni in her ear. 'Teng laffjfeb has seen him at the Yao house."

The old woman reached out her faltering hand and clutched Tanni.

"You say my son has <»}me back? And he is still living? Where is he?*' she exclaimed. *

"He is living," said Lao Peng. "We will find him for you."

The old woman began to cry, but even her weeping was feeble. Only her head and her body were shaking more tim usuaL

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“Where is he? Did you see him?” she said, now wiping her eyes.

*‘He is well and tall and strong,” said Lao Pei^. “He is up nordi. We are going to ask him to <x>me and see you. The war separated you, moiher and son, and the war will bring you together again. I know the Yao femily. Your son is related to them. He married the daughter of the Kung family.”

The old woman put her hand to her ear and her eyes peered at Lao Peng, in an etort to comprehend what he was saying, and memory came bach to her, and she said: “You mean that he is married to Mr. Kung’s sister? A good girl, she was, and I was serving her, too. Where can we find my son? Take my money and send it to him. Ask him to come with my daughter-in-law and see his mother before she dies. Let me see bis &ce and hear his voice, and I shall die happy.” She shook her head and smiled and panted and smiled again.

“Shall I buy the cofiin now?”

“Yes, buy my cofiBn. I shall wait for my son to come and then I shall die.”

Lao Peng went in to Hankow to send the telegram to Poya, and he bought a good maplewood cofl&i.

The following day when the coflSn came, Chenma was able to come out to the firont room to see it. Her fece beamed with pride as she felt the hard surfece of the maplewood. The women and children were staring at her and she said to them smiling: “It is ■ good, strong wood for my old body to lie in.” She had it moved into her room, and she often examined it and touched it and was happy.

lAo Peng said that he would stay to wait for Poya’s reply, but while he had been away at Hankow, the sick girl Pinpin Tiad been moved into his room, and so he slept in the inner room, which Tanni had to pass through to reach me sick girl’s. That mnming he had seen Tanni bring in some wild camdinas to put in the vase that stood on the table before Pinpin’s window.

After Imchj'Tanni came to sec the sick girl. Her bed lay close to the window, and the foliage outside reflected the sunlight, making the room quite bright. The gkl was lying in bed, her eyes d^ black and her fece hollow and flushed. She had been ftightened by the arrival of the cofl5n,for she had seen it brought in through the feont room.

Pinpin's little brotiber was with her. The girl in bed was teaching him the mxiltiplication table.

Now and then Pinpin would halt and let her little brother take the lead. She saw Tanni come in, and smiled and went on with the table.

times seven forty-nine. Eight times seven fifty-six. Nine times seven sixty-three. Ten times seven seventy! We got through this time;”

The two children laughed triumphantly at the end. Tanni laughed with them. But she remembered that these were mother-less children and she felt beneath their innocent gaiety the pathos of this little girl teaching her younger brother.

'*But you mustn^t tire yourself,” she said.

Pinpin said: *^Thank you for the flowers. I was asleep when you came in, but I knew you had put them there. The little rogue is very clever. He can say the multiplication table up to seven now. What comes next? Twelve times seven would be eighty-four — and then I get confiised.^^

^Tfour mind is too active,” said Tanni. 'TDon't you want to sleep now?”

^TSIo, come and talk with me. I had enough sleep this morning.”

Tanni seated herself by the bed, and asked the boy to leave the room to give his sister a rest.

Lao Peng, in the next room, heard the conversation,

'THow are you feeling now?" asked Tanni.

am all right. The injections did me good. Except I still' coughed a great deal, in the early hours of the morning, and then by morning I felt so tired and sleepy. Sister Goddess of Mercy, why are you so beautiful?"

'Tt is because you like me.'^

^'No, it is true. I never saw anyone as beautiful as you are and as kind as you are. You saved our lives, my &ther, my brother, and me. I want to grow up to be like you. How long do you think it will lake to get well?"

'T don^t know. You must rest quietly and have good food and plenty of sunshine, and you will be well."

''When the war is over, you must come and visit us at Chin-kiang. We have a small house and a little garden of our own. And our house looks out on a river, just like here. It is the same Yangtse, my father told me. And there is an island in

the rivet, called the Golden Hill, full of trees. We diildrei
used to play on the bank until the wat came."

"Was your mother ■with you?"

"No, my mother died when my younger brother was bom
You must come and visit us when the wat is over. We are no
rich, but I want you to see my home."

"Yes, I will come and visit you."

Suddenly the girl asked: "Do you think I am going to die?"

"Oh, no. You'll grow up to a beautiful girl. Why do yor
ask such a question?"

"I saw the cofHn this morning, and I am a&aid."

"Don't be afraid. The old woman bought it with her own
. money. She is very old, and you are a yoimg girl. Don't think of
such things. Come, shall we play cat's-ctadle again?"

Pinpin heartily agreed, and as they played, they went on talking.

"I want to grow up as kind and gentle as you are. I want to be
beautiful, but I caimot hope to be like you. Then I want to be a

nurse and I don’t want to marry and just look beautiful aU day.”

“You ate thinking very fet ahead,” said Tanni with a smile.

“But when you ate beauti^, somebody will fell in love with you,

and then what?”

“Then I still won’t marry him. ”

“Then you will be really unkind .”

“I hear in the stories that a man in love can almost die for a

sight of the girl, and then get well when he sees her — ^is that true?”

Tanni, aware that Lao Peng was in the next room, answered

shyly. "Perhaps, it is true, if the girl is ve^ beautiful and the man

loves her very much.”

Thus they sat and talked and played the cat’s<tadle until Tanni

said she must rest and mustn’t think of the mnltiplirgtion table

and left her alone.

* *

*

The following morning brought a pleasant surprise. rThwimg

kept asking fijr news, and Tanni told her she must be fot

she w^ uncertain whether Poya might not have riready left
ICweilin and missed the telegrasm.

That morning Yumei came in to Tanni and said that a beautiful
fflid well-dressed lady had come to the house and asked to see Mjci;
Peng, and that a young man was^with her. Tanni went out to sec

m

them in ihe bate fironf room. The lady met her with a curious
gaze, a half-smile upon her lips. She was clad in a black gown
which Tanni could see was of the finest material, and carried a
suAde handbag that certainly must have come ficom SbangTiai.
She was middle-aged and yet of perfect figure. There was
something re&eshing and original about her, a mellowed ease of
manner, and an unusual grace and beauty. The young tnati was
tall, with square shoulders and well-chiselled features, and he was
in Ghungshao uniform.

When the lady began to speak, Tanni heard the dis tif) gaishe.d
orthodox Peking accent. *T am Mrs. Tseng. I am sorry to come
like this without ceremony, but I had a telegram ftom Poya asking
me to come and see you.”

Tanni’s heart leaped, and she cried out an involuntary "Ohl”

"Are you Miss Peng? I am Poya’s Second Aunt. This is my son, Atung.”

Tanni darted a swift glance at her and smiled acknowledgment.

"Oh, you are his aunt Mulanl You must excuse me for

appearing like this. I never dreamed of ” She hastened to

move some stools, in a flurry that sent her hair felling over her shoulders. Her confusion was apparent upon her fece.

Mulan said: *‘1 got this telegram last night, and I was so excited that I had to come and see you the first thing this morning.”

"We have been waiting to hear from Poya,” said Tanni, as she took the telegram. While she was reading it, she was conscious that Mulan was watching her kindly, with that half-smile con% standy hovering around her mouth.

Kindly visit Miss Tanni Peng in refugee house on Hungshan.
Chen San’s mother is there. Help find out Chen San’s address.
Please treat Miss Peng as your own relative, and invite her to your house for my sake. To know her is to appreciate her. Pota.

Tanni blushed a little as she came to the end of the telegram.

This was more than she had hoped for. She had not known that Mulan was in Hankow. When she was in Shanghai, Poya had told her of his fomous Aunt Mulan with great ftn^y pride and afiection, and had spoken of her as living in Hangchow. ’

“When you know my Second Aunt, you will be proud of me,” Poya had said. Instinctively she felt that this visit was

weighted with consequences for her own future with Fcya.

Covering with excitement, she ran to call Lao Peng, and he went in and brought out Chenma, who came out tottering onher old legs.

Mu^ rose and went very close to her, and placed her han/fs on her shoulders.

“Are you Qhenma? I am Mulan, the Second Daughter of the Yao fiimily. Do you remember me?”

Oienma looked up at Mulan with her filmy eyes, and coughed and tried to speak, but tears began to flow from her eyes, aad she took up the end of her jacket and wiped them silently. Mulan helped her to sit down on her stool, where she sat, still weeping.

Tanni saw that Mulan was deeply stirred. For Mulan knew the full history of this woman, who for thirty years had been looking for her son and had borne ^one and with fortitude the punisliment that Fate had inflicted upon her motherhood. Tanni saw a pitying tear roll down Mulan’s cheek as her rather tall slender figure bent over Qienma. At last, with her head still bent, Quen San’s mo th' T asked: “Where is my son?”

Mulan’s voice was warm and low as she replied: “He is well. He is in the north. I will at once send a telegram and ask him to come down to see you.”

“How many days will it take?”

“It will lake one or two weeks, if he can come by the railway.”

The old woman now dried her teats and asked: “How id my -son look when he returned?”

"He was tall and strong. He married Huan-erh, Lifu’s sister. They might come down together,” said Mulan with a great effort to please her.

“Oh, I have a daughter-in-lawl Do I have a grandson?”

*‘Not that I know of. Would you like to come and stay in my house until your son and daughter-in-law come?”

The old woman replied that she was comfortable where she was.

Tanni whispered to Mulan that the old woman had bought her cofiBn and daily spoke of her death. They assisted her back to her room. When Mulan saw the new coffin she was

“Can you persuade her to leave this room and come to stay wi4 you?” said Tanni. “Her son will be disturbed to find her staying in that room with three coffins. If you have a room for her we

can send sedan chairs to take her down.” ’

Now while they went over the grounds together, Mulan told Lao Peng and Tanni and Yumei more of the story of the old woman. Tanni listened excitedly and saw Mulan’s quick darting eyes, bright with a playful light of whimsy that justified all that Poya had said about her. The way she constantly bent her head to one side showed a wayward spirit lurking beneath her outward pattern of conventionality. There is an instinctive reaction during the first meeting of a woman with her fiance’s women relatives, a natural chemical repugnance or affinity that could be accounted for only by the higher senses. Tanni felt a thrill as she heard firom Mulan an inside story of the Yao femily, told in her stately accent, and with the charm of mannered ease and refinement. She had felt no such thrill when she met Paofen and Dimftagrance.

Mulan was a true Yao. Tanni knew at once that she adored Mulan, and felt in Mulan a power over her that was close and human and affectionate.

It was evident that Mulan took a great interest in Tanni, not only because Poya's telegram asked her to treat her as a relative, hut because she was pleased by this young girl doing charity work on this picturesque hill, and more particularly because she had received a letter Kom her brother Afei. His letter had told her about Poya's love afeir and about the trouble Tanni was in. While his tone was sympathetic, he had hinted that there might be trouble firom Poya's wife.

Mulan was completely surprised now when she saw how Tanni was living among the refugees, and her heart warmed towards her. Mulan, of all women, had no prejudice against concubines. While she t^ed abourthe fiimily, Tanni felt that she was already being treated as a relative.

\l^en they came back to the fironf room, a delayed telegram firom Poya had come asking Tanni to get in touch with Mulan. After arranging to have Qaenma brought to her house three days later, Mulan said to Tanni, "Game over and stay for lunch. I want to talk with you about certain things." Knowing what the meeting might mean for her, Tanni thanked her for her kindness and gladly agreed. «

With difficulty rbantna was persuaded to leave the place. On

the third day they set out, with the old woman carried in a sedan chair. They made an occasion of it. Lao Peng was returning to his hotel. Yumei was gradually regaining her spirits. Tanni

suggested tTiat she go to Hankow for a day to see a movie and they took Gold Luck along, not telling him about the movie nnril they had started. Chenma reluctantly left her new coffin behind, after being told that it was in safe keeping there, and that she could not possibly take it into Mulan’s house.

They arrived about ten o’clock at Mulan’s house. It was a ■stnall separate house with five or siz rooms and a small garden at the back, in the outlying district of Hankow overlooking the Han River. A business ffistrict had grown up here and most of the shops and houses were new. Lao Peng went on with the others into the dty, and Mulan, wishing to have a private talk with Tanni, did not insist on their staying.

At lunch, Tanni met Mulan’ s husband, Sunya, and her daughter Amei, a gkl of eighteen, besides her son, Atung, who was having a month’s leave ftom the army, after participating in fighting in Anhwei. It was a cosy, small &nily. They told her that they had left Hangchow at die end of last year and arrived at Hankow in January, and the four orphans they had picked up on the way

were sml with them.

Mulan sent a telegram in care of the Eghth Route Army Headquarters to be transmitted to Chen San. There was no telling how long it would take to reach him, as the chief characteristic of the guerrillas vm their extreme mobility. But Atung assured them that the guerrillas had a perfect system of telephonic communication of their own; in feet, the whole population of the guerrilla afeas acted as their communication lines. It tj^s this system of i n t elli gence that accounted for their great success.

The story of Chenma awakened old memories, and soon the femily were indulgiog in reminiscences, while Tanni, as the only outsider, sat and nstened. Mulan was telling her children about Sunya's shyness during their period of engagement.

^ "Your fether dared not speak a word to me, when I went to his home."

*'Yes, and your mother avoided coming to my home afref we were engaged," rejoined Sunya. 'TIow things have changed."

*T did go to your home. Do you remeofeer when Tijen was going to Eng lan d , and I went to your home, and you asked me if I was ^lug to Englan d, and your fece went red all over?"

*Who is Tijen?" whispered Tanni to Amei, sitting by her side.

“Tijen is my mother’s brother, Poya’s fether,” replied AmH

**18 it true. Father? Did you blush to see Mother?” asked AmeL

"She blushed more than I did,” answered Sunya. "She did herself and would not come out to see me when I went to call on her parents on New Year’s Day.”

Tanni quietly enjoyed the bantering laughter of the femily. Atung was "very attentive to her.

"I heard Mother say you were staying at out Peiping home,” he said.

Tanni nodded.

"Was the house all right, not occupied by the Japs?”

At last Tanni had a chance to say something. She told them that the house was all right when she left, and then she was asked questions about their relatives in Shanghai. As the questioners constatJtly used the terms, "second maternal auntie by marriage” and "second paternal auntie by marriage,” she had a busy time keeping the relationships straight. It was exciting and charming to her to hear these relatives referred to in this way instead of by the form of adxlress used by outsiders, and she fiilt proud to be

the conveyor of news among the Yao and Tseng relatives. It was altogether a heart-warming experience for her.

**How was Eldest Sister-in-kw?" asked Amei.

Tanni was confused. "She means Poya's wife, BCainan," e]q)lained Mulan, in a slightly lower tone. She had told only her husband about the complicated afikir with Poya, as Afei had told it in his letter to her.

After a moment's hesitation, Tanni said with a strange smile, **1 heard feom her only a week or so ago." When no one asked further, her momentary embarrassment passed, and Mulan began to teU her femily about what Tanni was doing at the refugee house, which she described enthusiastically. The slight reserve Tanni had seen on their first meeting was gone. Mulan still wore het bangs in feont, and her hands and fingers moved constantly in pretty gestures.

After lunch, Mulan took Tanni to her own room, where she apologized for the shabby furniture, explaining that she did not know how long they would stay at Hankow. It was nevertheless a neat little room, with an eastern window looking out on several peach trees already partly in bloom, scenting the air with a subtle feagrance. A desk stood before the window, with several , books and albums of calligraphy rubbings spread out

upon it, bathed in the green reflected fi:om the leaves outside.

Tanni had come in her best gown, the grey worsted with lavender trimmings which Poya had designed for her and which she had not put on since her arrival at Hankow. Below her long sleeves, her jade bracelet showed.

MuIm saw. it and asked, '*You love jade?"

"Yes. But I put it on when I was young and now I cannot it off."

Timidly and still not quite at ease, Tanni turned the pages of the calligraphy album.

"Are you learning the Wei Inscriptions?"

*T look at them when I can. Sometimes I do a fifteen minutes' exercise after lunch. It is very good for restoring anrl ralming the spirit. Looking at them, one gets back to another world."

''But I thought that copying the Wei Inscriptions was only for men, for old retired schokrsi"

Mulan smiled and went on. "In my youth I used to admire

Cheng Siaoshu’s bold powerful stroke. But later I it.

It had too much spirit for me. After all, it is a sensuous type of beauty, all mobility and suppleness of the flesh. Then I went in for 4e antique, super-sensuotis flavour of the Wei Rubbings. But it is a h^der kind of beauty to achieve.'

Mulan now began to ask Tanni about the afeir her brother had ■written about in his letter. “Don’t be gfrai<^ ©f me,” she said, “I may be able to help you.”

• Touched by Mulan’s obvious kindness, Tanni gradually answered a few questions about herself and Poya. Her story of former connections with traitors intrigued Mulan’s interest, and her shy, hesitating tone drew Mulan closer to her. To her immeme relief, she found that Mulan did not like Kaman.

“It is difficult for a girl in my position. Something always goes wfong. I have a fear of women.”

Mu lan smiled a droll smile. “Any woman in love is afraid of other women.”

*Yes, but I mean more. I mean the social prejudices of women. They always make me shiver. I know that I have not been a mod woman in the usual sense. I have done foolish things in mv youth. ...” ®

„ ought to do some fijolish things in youth,” said Mulan.

They ate what make you feel young and spirited when you tbinlr

about them in yout quieter old age, I am now over forty. I wish I had committed more youthful follies to save up for recollections in my. later days.” _

Tanni was surprised and amused by the quizzical smile upon Mulan’s lips.

*‘But you are so different!” she almost protested. “You had your family.”

“I am not so different as you think. I had romance — suppressed romance. It was so in those days.”

She looked kindly at Tanni. “Miss Peng, you have love, great love.”

Tanni looked up. “Please call me Tanni. You are the first woman who has h^ no prejudice against me.”

“How could I, after seeing you? I like girls who have spirit and some romance in them, and who are unusual and not quite womeny quite correct. I suppose I got that ftom my fether.”

“I saw your fether’s portrait at your ancestral h^ in Peiping.”

“Yes, he was a great man, and he was a Taoist. A Taoist is a man who has no social prejudices. I learned many things ftom my fether.”

“You are a very unusxial femily. You and Poya share the same breadth of mind. That may be what attracted me to him.”

“Yes, there is a strain of romance in our ftmily — all except my sister Mochow.”

To Tanni, this discovery was more important than her visit to the Yao home. In Peiping she had seen and admired the Prince’s Garden, but now she saw in Mulan a daughter and a spirit of the Yao femily itself. And before she left Mulan’s home she had Mulan’s consent to Poya’s marriage to her.

“What will Poya’s other relatives say?” she asked.

“Poya is independent. The others have nothing to say. He listens only to me,” said Mulan, smiling.

Tanni’s spirit was buoyant as she came to Lao Peng’s ho^. The party had not yet come back ftom the theatre. The waiter recognized her as Lao Peng’s constant visitor and admitted her to his room. She sat down in an armchair, overcome with the dis-covery of Mulan, happy beyond measure that the fami l y had

treated her so kindly. It was such a change from the conventional fliRrriTninatirn ij the iusultiug innu endoes of men and that “look of wives” that she had so long known.

She worshipped Mukn. But there were two secrets that she could not and would not tell Mulan. One was her pregnancy. The other was what had happened to Lao Peng.

When she thought of Lao Peng she felt tender and very sorry for This great-hearted man \ras now without a question talcing himself out of the way as unselfishly as he had offered to protect her name , before the word ftom Poya came. There had not been even a remote hint of self-sacrifice on his part. Yet she knew. What could she do to repay him for his unspoken kind-ness? Had she been too confident of his resistance to woman, of the years th^t separated them? Had she been too affectionate, shoifid she continue to be affectionate, to him? She fervently hoped that after she was married, Lao Peng could remain a part of the fomily, as she had always wanted it.

Soon she heard the laughing voices of Gold Luck and Yumei, who came in with Lao Peng.

To make it a holiday for Yumei and Gold Luck they went to a restaurant for supper. They ordered foied pepper and steamed turtle, for which iWkow was famous.

Lao Peng had some news of the war. There had been a great victory at Uni in Shantung, east of Taierchuang. General U Tsungjen's telegraphic rq)ort of the victory was printed in newspaper extras which were being sold in the streets.

"^e you really going up north?" asked Tanni.

'Tfes. Grandma Chao is going up in about a week. She is ^ing to the Hopei-Honan border north of the Yellow Ri-rer. But a great battle is developing around Hsuchow, and afer seeing the guerrillas with Grandma Chao, I am going there, by the Lunghai Railway."

"will you be back when Poya comes? He will arrive in May."

"I suppose so."

*'Uncae Peng, you must Remember the trouble we had when you left us and went to Nanking. You will want to see Poya, and there will be things happening." She could not quite say what was in her mind, that the wedding must take place as soon as possible, that there would be awkward things to e^ g^lain^ and a divorce to arrange. She would need his help, and she wanted him at her wedding.

"Of course I shall be at your wedding," said T.an Peng, as if he had read the worried thoughts in her eyes.

She looked up at him -with an expression of deep gratitud e and also of pity, even as the gilt Buddha had looked do-wn upon her.

Upstairs, there was a noise of stamping and hilarious coarse laughter. Lao Peng looked up at the ceiling and laughed.

“You remember Batdesnake?”

“Yes, of course,” said Tanni.

“That is Rattlesnake upstairs. We met him on the staircase this afternoon.”

“You wouldn’t know him,” Yumei broke in. “He was dressed in full uniform and was carrying a big cane besides. Unde Peng recognized him by his voice.”

“He says he is on leave, but nobody knows,” said Lao Peng. “He is a kind of officer now, swaggering as usual, proud as a peacock in his uniform, followed by a soldier, and bellowing right and left at the waiters. He told me a tall story fight m the corridor iu everybody’s heating. Yumei, you tell it.”

Yumei was bursting to teU the story. “Nobody knows whether it is true or not. But he is an officer, that I could see. He said that

after the enemy had come back and burned the village at Hosiwu, he led a band of young men and joined the guerrillas. He said when they raided a dty which the Japanese held, he killed themHke pigs. When the Japanese counter-attacked, he fought his way ouf^ killing another thirty or forty single-handed wim his big knife .

But he didn’t return to his men. T just wanted a rest,’ he said. *My men took me for dead after a few days, thinking I had been killed. Killed? G>uld Lo Tako be killed so easily? 1 had merely gone off where I chose. When I returned a we^ later, I found my men holding a memorial service for me, with candles and a slaughtered pig and sheep. I just walked in and said, 'Hlo, bromers, what are you doing here? Lo Hako is with you here in the flesh.” And my men shouted and made it into a red feast.’ He is with Grandma’s Chao son, Chao Tung, now. Their bands have grovn tx> five thousand, and they are in eight districts on the border of Hopei, Honan, and Shansi provinces.”

“It is inctediblel” said Lao Peng. “He was drunk this after-noon. You hear how he bellows and carouses in the room upstdrs. 1 don’t know where he gets his money. StiU he makes a good fighter.”

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> 1 :

Unbelievable as it seemed, Qien San received the telegraph message about his mother in the mountains of eastern Shansi four days after Mulan sent it from Hankovr. EUs reply came a few days later, expressing great happiness and his urgent desire to see his old mother and imke up for his sins of filial impiety. He said he was starting at once to come with Huan-erh, "by starry night,” but they were near the Maiden’s Pass, guarding the mountainous border between Hopei and Shansi. Communications were bad, and there vrere many enemy soldiers, and it might be ten or twelve days before he could reach the railway. But they would travel by night and day.

On receiving the telegram, Mulan sent word to Lao Peng’s hotel. It was me night before his departure for the north, and Tanni and her girl friends, Chiuhu and Tuan Wen, had come to give him a fiirewell party.

“There is an account available for you at the bank in case you should need money for the refugees’ home,” Lao Peng told Tanni. "And Chiuhu and Miss Tuan, you must visit her as often as you can, to keep her company,” he told them for the fourth or fifth time.

"Be sure to write to me,” said Tanni. "I shall be worried about you.”

‘T. will,” he said, his voice a little sad. "But don’t bother to come and see me off to-morrow. I shall be going with Grandma Chao and her frmily and I shall be well taWfi care of.”

But next day they all went to the station, even Wang Tamang herself, who said that she could not let their benefactor go without a proper farewell and she would represent the refugees.

A big noisy crowd had come to see, Grandma Chao. Dele-Mtions from student bodies and other organizations had brought loads of cotton dioes and cotton clothing for the guerrillas to go •^thher. Tanni for the first time saw this old lady. She was over si^ and looked like any old country woman, but her fa re was bright with smiles and her voice rang with the spirit of youth. Tanni was introduced to her son and daughter and was greatly moved when she shook hands with the gkl, Lijen, who was going to the front.

There was also Rattlesnake, standing on the car platform in his uniform, a cigar in his mouth, and still holding a cane, bowing to

everybody and very pleased that so many people had come to see him off.

A students' brass band played a tune and the atmosphere was tense with excitement. Someone asked Grandma to speak a few words. She went and stood on the cat platform, with Ratdesnake standing proudly in his five feet ten above her .small figure, /^finking in all the glory of this public tribute to their patriotism and service to the country. The Mother of the Guerrillas spoke:

' 'Brothers and sisters of the same womb, I am an old country woman and know nothing. I cannot read or write. I know only that Japan wants to destroy our country, and that we must fight Japan. I know that all the common people should love their country, and I am only doing my part as a country woman. My husband is too old. But my son and my two daughters are aU fighting. We in the North-east in Manchuria have a saying, 'Tear down die house to clear out the mice. Ta Kan. Do an all-out job.' I have yet another son; he is too young, only fourteen, otherwise he would come with me, too. I am very much toudied by your gifts. General Ghkng has given me a thousand dollars. If we n««d more money or dothing, I will come back to you for it."

These simple words spoken with cheerful courage by this sinq)le old woman, going to the front at her age, mov^ her hushed hearers and stung some of them to shame. When she finished, a girl leader called for cheers for Grandma Chao and for the guerrillas, followed by a great cheer for China's victory. The Mother of the Guerrillas smiled and nodded to them and turned away into the car.

Ratdesnake, left alone on the car platform, surveyed the audience and deared his throat and began, “I, your younger brother, also cannot read and write ... da hemi Your younger brother, Lo the Big Brother, your younger brother. ...”

But his voice was drowned in the commotion, and the drde around the car platform had moved away. Lao Peng said that Grandma Chao’s son had compelled Rattlesnake to leave Hankow because he was collecting money for the guerrillas on ftlse pretences, and had greatly misbehaved with women.

The whistle blew. Lao Peng shook hands with them all. His cheeks were wet and shining, and he swung his tall, bent body into the car without turning round.

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The ttain began to pull out of the station. Lao Peng’s fece appealed at a window. Tanni walked and then ran with the car, her eyes wet. . . .

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Tanni suddenly realized that she was alone, in spite of Yumei and the others, with a heavy responsibility for the refugees. They went back to the hotel and gathered up a few books and some clothing that Lao Peng had left. Then she sent her companions home in the charge of Qiiuhu and went to see Mulan.

Mulan’s entire family was at home, and she told them of the departure of Mr. Peng and the Mother of the Guerrillas.

And when it was time for her to go, Mulan asked Svmya to accompany her, and asked her daughter Amei to go with them. So Tanni left with Sunya and Amei. On the ferry they heard a party of girls singing 'Tor China Cannot Perish.” After the scene at the station, a thrill went down Tanni’s spine when she heard the melody and the words Chm^suo pubam wang repeated again and again.

She found Sunya pleasant and easy-going, and she enjoyed talking with Amei, who was a shy, sensitive gkl. She took thpm to see the Motaochuan, the "knife-sharpening spring,” which was only a mile ftom the refugee home. This was the place .where Kuan Kung in the Three the most popular soldier-hero

of the Chinese people and deified as the God of War, sharpened his "Green-Dragon Sleeping-Moon Big Knife,” and neat by was a temple to him.

When they arrived at the home, Chiuhu met them and gqid,

“Pinpin is getting worse.”

"Didn’t the injections do her any good?” asked Tanni, worried.

"I gave her only glucose. There is a new American prepara-
tion, but it costs about twenty dollars a dose.”

"Never mind the cost. We must have it”

They went in to see the sick child, and Sunya and Amei
ft>lbwed them in. The fether, Nt. Ku, was sitting by the jvdstde,
shabby and miserable. The (^d’s arms and legs were as skinny
and gaunt as those of -an old invalid. But her fece had grown
more spkitual.

"Chiuhu said the fether. "Save my child’s life. Can

we send her to a hospital?”

Chiuhu shook her head. "She should not be ‘moved at all.
And the hospital is not as quiet or as orderly as this place. It is
crowded to limit with wounded soldiers. Here I can mmf and
see her every day, and there is a good medicine, very costly, but
Sister Goddess of Mercy has said that she will pay for it.”

The &ther looked at Tanni, his eyes filled with silent gratitude.

"This child has suffered a lot since out departure. I lost her elder brother. You must save her.”

Pinpin smiled at the visitors. Tanni went dose to her and hp'H her small, skinny hand with slender fingers, white like onions. The small hand lay feeble in Tanni’s grasp.

"Do you want to pinch me again?” asked Tanni. For Pin pin had come to treat Tanni almost as her molher. She often played with the bracelet on Tanni ’s atm and stared at its green translucent lustre. Once Pinpin had pinched her wrist while Tanni was talking wi& her fether, and Tanni W allowed it So it had developed into a game for the child and an easy way of pleasing her for Tanni.

Pinpin’s hand searched for the bracelet and tried to pinda Tanni again, and smiled happily. But now her fingers were feeble.

"Pinch harder.”

**1 can’t” Her little fingers relaxed and lay motionless.

"Tell me honestly, am I going to die?”

"Honestly, you are not. Chiuhu cbiebebUb will give you a new medicine, which is like magic. It comes from America.”

“It must be very expensive.”

‘Tt is very expensive. That’s why it must be good.”

“How much does it cost?”

"About twenty dollars each dose.”

“It must be very good medicine then,” said (he child quietly.
"But we can’t pay for it”

“You must not worry. I will pay for you. I will pay for any-
thing to make Pinpin wdl. You want to get well, don’t you?”

"Yes, I want to get well and grow up to be like you,” said
the duld slowly, word by word. stopped at the Eighth
Book of the Reader. 1 looked at the pictures in the Ninth and
Tenth Books that my dder brother had at home. He told me
some of the stories, but I want to read them myself Sister
Goddess of Mercy, foere are so many things that I want to do,
when I grow up.”

“You mustn’t talk too much mm” whispered Tanni softly
to her.

'“No, I must tell you what I have in mind. Sister Goddess of

Mercy, you promised to come to our home when the war is over. I have planned the dinner. There will be wined crabs and our Chinkiang siaqjo and I'll kill our biggest chicken. I know where I will seat you, and my £a.ther and Pientse and my elder brother if we find him. There will be five seats on our square table, but I will share the same side with you. And I will dress in red and

f jut a jasmine in my hair in your honour. And we shall sit and ook at the sunset. The sunset is always glorious there."

The child found sudden strength to say these things because they lay in her heart, and now she lay panting, her spiritual eyes seeing vividly many things that were not visiUe to the others.

"I will come to your dinner. But you must rest very quietly. To-morrow the new American medicine will come."

"You pay for me first, for I want to live. I'll repay you when I grow up, I will."

Tanni Ijit her lips hard.

"You are crying," said the chUd. "Why are you crying. Sister Goddess of Mercy?"

Tanni wiped her eyes and smiled. "Because I love you and am happy for you. The new medidne will do you good."

“I have told you what I want to do. Now I will sleep.”

Pinpin’s eyes closed. When her big deep eyes were open they seemed to be the whole of her fece so that one saw nothing else. But now her nose, sharp and pointed, stood out high above her sallow dhee^, breathing audibly die breath that kept the spark of life glowing. Once she cotghed painfully and her big eyes opened, and Ta nni bent and patted her and closed her eves asrain with her hand. ^

The next day CHuhu brought the new medicine that had rnmf seven thousand miles across the sea horn a country which Pinpin had only heard about at school. It worked like magic, and after three days, her appetite improved, she felt less listless and enervated, and her strength began gradually to return.

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Now on the seventh day after Lao Peng’s departure, the Japanese once more bombed Hankow and Wuchang. It had been

more than a month since the last air raid over Hankow. In the annals of the Chin a War the raid of March the twenty-seventh

over Hankow was but one of the thousands of air raids. Poya’s statistics might show it as "A.R. No. 529” or “561.” But human events are not as simple as statistics. This raid, ordinary as it was, and probably already forgotten by most of the citizens of Hankow, worked a change in the lives of Tanni, Lao Peng, and Poya. Human life is incredibly complex. A few bombs manu&ctured in Osaka, flown by American oil, and dropped over a clump of rocks in Wuchang profoundly afferted a middle-aged man who was now five hundred miles away in Honan and a yoimg man a thousand miles away on the road to Kunming, as we shall see later.

That March day some children came in to report that the alarm signal had been hoisted on the river bank, and soon a long siren confirmed it. As usual, the people prepared to go into the woods behind. Pinpin’s father was always the first to get his children away.

"What about Pinpin?” he asked Qduhu.

"She must not move.”

The &thet, though nervous himself, decided to stay through the raid with his side daughter.

At about two o’clock, seventy enemy planes came in several waves. As the anti-aircraft guns were hurling an intensive fire into the sky, the planes kept above four thousand metres and

dropped several hundred bombs on Hankow and Wuchang^
hitting the South Lake and the Hsuchiapeng and Yuchiatou
districts, destroying houses and killing many people.

One bomb landed on Hungshan fifty yards down the slope, so
near that the whole house shook and the glass in the windows was
shattered. The explosion was so great that a big rock was blown
apart and a chip forty or fifty potmds in weight flew up and hit
a comer of the roof and landed on the stone yard within.

Pinpin was cowering in her bed, her fether stopping her ears
with his hands, when the rock crashed through the roof and sent
the plaster down filling the air with thick, choking dust.

By an old instinct, Ku clutched his daughter in his arms and
can through the falling rafters and the blinding dust into the open
and made for the woods. Ehs legs were shaking and he stumbled
as he went up the earthen steps, his body fal l mg on top of the

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datightet’s body, but his arms still holding her tightly. Slowly
he got to his feet and carried the child into the woods.

A tall column of dust still hung in the air, rising feom where
the bomb had fellen, and another smaller column rose from the

roof of the house.

‘'What has happened?” shouted the people.

Mr. Ku, carrying the sick child in his we^ arms, shufiSing and shaking, was too upset to speak. Silence struck the company.

“Is Pinpin hurt?” asked Tanni, forcing a note of calm in her voice.

“No.” He laid the child down on the ground, panting with fear and exertion. His fece was pale, but paler was the diild’s, although she was dead silent. Qduhu came and felt her hand. The child’s eyes dilated with terror. Chiuhu and Tanni sat on the grass and tried to calm her.

“Wiere’s Pientse?” asked Pinpin about her younger brother.

“He is safe,” they told her.

The planes were sdll roaring overhead and the distant anti-aircraft guns were filling the sky with a continuous boom that echoed over the valley. No one dared to move. Now Ku found words to speak. “Something hit our house with a terrific bang and the roof crashed down. I picked up Pinpin and ran.”

Then Wang Tamang ventured to go into the house, anfj returned with the report that only a few rafters had fellen down,

and that a rock the size of a man’s hat had crashed on the yard. Splitting the slabs. The ground was strewn with dust and broken glass.

“It is lucky that no one is hurt,” she remarked.

They sat and waited for an hour, with Tanni holding Piupin’s hand. Suddenly Pinpin began to cough, and a stream of blood oozed ficom her mouth, colouring the grass. Then she lay barV ^ breathing noisily.

When the planes were gone and the all-clear sigtial was sounded, Mr. Ku, who was really a very wesJk person, said, “I dare not carry her again.”

So Chiuhu and Yumei carried her, slowly step by step down the slope, and back to her fiither’s bed.

The people’s hearts still fluttered. A sense of tension was in the house. Pinpin, now laid comfortably in bed, dozed off, unconscious.

Tanni and Chiuhu sat with Pinpin’s &thet, hoping t'hg*- she would go oflF into a quiet sleep. But her hands constantly twitched nervously and her eyes opened again.

"Tieb, I shall leave you now. I just saw wo ko [my elder brother!. I know. ...”

But before she went further, another thick streatn of blood overflowed and oozed &om the corners of her mouth, staining the bedclothes. She wanted to sit up so as to cough better, but she was too weak and had to be bolstered up. But in a second her body relaxed and she was gently laid down again. She lay motionless there. Some tears tridded from her closed eyes.

This kept on for the greater part of that afternoon. Tanni sat through hours of agony, feeing death itself but refusing acceptance of it. The child’s nervous twitches would cease for a quarter of an hour and start again. Chiuhu gave her a slight dose of morphine. Pientse was kept away from the room, and the three sat speechlessly, watching the silent, dramatic struggle between life and death in the sleeping child.

Then, as the day darkened and dusk crept by towards the supper hour, the child woke once and asked, “Why is it so dark?” And they lighted some extra candles to brighten the room.

ftesendy Tanni saw her lips move. She wanted to say something. Tanni held the candle close to her fece. Her eyes opened, but ihe light in them was remote and unearthly. She spoke her words very slowly, one by one, her gaze travelling around the^ company:

“What are these people doing here? We are all guests here. Our home is not here, but down the Yangtse. . . . Don’t cry. Sister Goddess of Mercy. When the war is over, we shall all go home. I have yet to study the Ninth Reader.”

Her eyes closed again. After a whole, they opened again, and this time she seemra to recognize the persons and her mind seemed clearer. To her fether, she said, “TfeA, I am leaving you now. Don’t weep for me. Take care of Pientse. Where is he?”

Chiuhu went to get the younger brother, and when he came in, Pinpin’s hands groped for his.

“Be a good hojyiiti” she said. “The Sister Goddess of Mercy win teach you the multiplication table.”

Pientse stood motionless and speechless, not understanding death. Then she asked for more light.

“Sister Goddess of Mercy, let me look at your fece.”

Tanni held ihe candle close to her own fece, so that the child might see it.

^e child looked at her, smiled and then closed her eyes, saying, “CMebcbieb, you are beautiful. , . .”

A slow line of blood trickled intermittently out of her mouth, but it was thin and the volume was small, and she was no longer conscious of it. A few minutes later, her breath stopped. Her little life dickered and went out like a small candle light. A white handkerchief hanging across the window swayed in the bteeze. Pinpin passed into eternity.

Slowly releasing the child's hand, Tanni felt a sorrow so deep that it found no teats. Because she had been so very close to her and knew the many thing s the child had planned to do, the febulous, little things, like finishing her school and playing host to Tanni at her Qiinkiang home, which she now had left undone and which could never come to pass now, her death was to her like the crushing of a flower by a merciless storm, or like the vanishing of an uncompleted dream. For Pinpin, too, was a leaf in the storm, a small leaf tom adrift on its young journey through the world and now dancing away alone, even a little gaily. Of these millions of leaves swept by ihe storm, some were luckier than otihers, and a mere accident, a senseless flying rock, had emshed the young life of this one, so full of hope and of longing for the beautiful, so willing to play the game. Wayferers' feet shall tread upon it, and the scavenger sh^ sweep it aside, little knowing that there was in it so much of beauty and courage and decent respect for the laws of living.

*'Poor child, she suffered much after we left home, and she never complained," said the fiither, and he broke into tears. And

Tanni could no longer restrain herself and wept aloud with the father.

It was already dark, but Wang Taniang came in and said that she w^ould go down to the city and buy a coffin. The father was penniless, and all the costs had to come ftom Tanni’s own purse. So Wang Tamatig went off to the city, with Gold Luck who went along to carry a lantern, and returned at nine, saying that the coffin would be delivered in the mo rning . Pin pin Vd no new dolhes, and her body was bathed and dressed again as she was, in a feded blue jacket and trousers. But Wang Tamng combed

her hair and put a camellia in it that the chiH had loved. were lighted, snd there W3,s sound of mouriiiiig in the house, but Pientse did not know enough to cry. The fether sat through half the night, while Tanni, overcome and exhausted with exief retired to bed with Chiuhu. ^ ’

Early the next morning the coffin came. Some villagers offered to dig a grave not far &om the back of the house. In the coffin Tanni laid the tattered and dog-eared Eighth Reader that had come with Pinpin on her migration journey and the piece of string with whi^ they had played cafs-cradle. A bright, mild sun shone ironically on the group standing above the child’s

grave. Seeing Tanni weep, even more than the fether, the women wept also, for weeping was contagious, and so, although there was not much ceremony, the dead diild received a warm tribute from her friends and neighbours. Wang Tammig said to her neighbours, ^*The child has died a worthy death, having so many tears shed over her. Sister Goddess of Mercy is really a good-hearted person."

The burial was done before ten o'clock, but all through the day Tanni sat listless, forgetting everything else. Even the room where the rock had crashed through was left in its disorder.

'Tf she had been sleeping in her fether's room, of in

that eastern room, she might not have received such a frigVi*- and she would not have di^" said Tanni, lying in her bed, still thinking.

"Calm your sorrow," said Yumei. "Who could know that the rock would hit that room?"

Birt the causality of events is such that every little happening is conditioned by a thousand antecedents. Tbs author of the Buddhist theory of Karma must have observed some such cause-and-effect relationship between remote events. If Lao Peng had not gone away, Pinpin would not have been moved into that room, ^d Lao Peng's going away was influenced by many other causes, including Tanni's pregnant and the promise of marriage,

which affected their relationship to one another. But it would he simpler to say that Pinpin would not have died if there had been no war started by a ^oup of empire-dreamers across the sea, who never knew her. And if Pinpin had not died, Tanni might not have gone to the war front later.

Lao Peng was right. On that day the newspapers repotted that

ovet a nundted persons were killed and a hundred and sixty more were injured. But the mere number of casualties had no meaning. Pinpin was not even among the casualties. The damage of war is not to be measured in terms of statistics, of the number of persons killed and the value of property destroyed. The death of Pinpin makes war indemnity ridiculous.

CHAPTER XrS

When MtjIiAn heard that Wuchang had been bombed and the Hungshan hit, she was greatly worried. The following afternoon, she took along Amei and her old faithful woman servant. Brocade, and went to visit the refugee home.

Tanni was in bed, asleep. Yumei came out to see them and told

them of the child’s death and burial that morning,, and explained that Tanni had wept a great deal that morning at the burial, and was now making up for lost sleep. There was a sense of desolation about the house. They saw the room which had been hit. Through a gaping hole in the roof, they could see the blue sky above. The &llen plaster was unswept and rafters still lay about in the way.

Wang Tamtmg came out to talk with them.

“A good Peng La^eh has a good Peng siaoehieh. She was like a mother to the child, and she wept as if the child had been her own.”

While the talk went on. Brocade told Yumei she wanted to see the young lady of whom she had heard her mistress talk so much. Yumei 1^ her into the room where Tanni was heavily asleep.

“It is pitiful,” said Yumei in whispers. “Peng ku^eh has gone away and left her in charge of this place. Only Wang Taniang can help run it. If the house had been really hit, and more of the ref^ees had been killed, I don’t know what our siaoebieb would do.” She came closer to whisper in Brocade’s ear. “She has happiness in her body too. Is the situation tight?”

*TSow do you mem?”

^Tt is the sbayth of your Yao &mily, and he does not know.”

Brocade looked more closely at Tanni, as she slept.

*Tt doesn’t show yet. How old is it?”

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“Thiee or four months. The other day she went out alone in the morning and fointed on the roadside. A woodcutter brought her back.”

Brocade left the room quiddy and went eagerly to her mistress and pulling Mukn aside, whispered the news to her. Mulan’s ftce show^ how startled she was. She called Yumei at once and asked her the details.

**Suucbhb and Yao sbaqyeb often saw each other in Shanghai,” said Yumei, blushing. “You are his aunt, and that is why I am falling you. Nobody here knows. I knew it only less than a monfo ago. Don’t let her know that I have told you. Your nephew didn’t write her for a long time.”

“Were foey very much in love with each other?”

Yumei blushed again. “Tatfai, we shouldn’t be saying such things. But they love each other before they are married! Can such a story be allowed to be known to p^ple? TSsiaoebieb should

know I have told you this, she might kill me.”

“Ifasn’t he proposed to marry her?”

“Who knows? It is a matter that shames one to death. But otherwise our siaoebieb is a most good-hearted person. I never approved.^’

‘*What should she do now, in your opinion?”

^“My opinion? Usually the sbaoyeb should marry the girl. But he is already married!” Then Yumei stopped, not sure she had done right to reveal Tanni’s secrets, or that she really wanted Tanni to marry Poya. “Ta/Aw, you are his aunt. Can you inform bim about it? Will he be angry when he heats it?”

Mulan was interested in Yumei’s naive anxiety, and gradually M nlan dtew ftom her all the story of what Ta nn i had done at Shanghai, of her misunderstanding with Poya and of the bu rn i ng of the silken scarf bearing their pledge of love. Then Mulan meditated a while.

Soon Tanni was awake. She called for Yumei when she heard voices outside. The bombing of the house and the d^th of Pinpin had unnerved her and she still did not feel like getting up, but when she was told that Mulan and her 'daughter had c^me to see her, she was delighted and asked that they shown in.

Mulan her daughter and Brocade went in. Ta ntu was 'sitting up bolstered in ihe good mahogany bed, covered by a red blanket, her eyes visibly swollen, and her hair spread around her

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shoiildets. Taaoi smiled heartily and apologized for being asleep when they tame, but her fece was pale and thin. Mulan looked at her in the light of what she had learned from Yumei a &w minutes ago, and so, as she spoke, her voice was deep and quiet and restrained.

“The bombing must have quite shaken you up. How is it that Peng Leu^eb has gone up and left you in charge of this place?”

“He wanted to see the war and the guerrillas. He went up with Grandma Chao — oh, I don’t know. . . She finished with a worried sigh.

“You need a rest, Tanni. What do you think of coming to my house for a few days’ test?”

St ifling her exultant surprise, Tanni said, “But I have to manage this house.”

Eventually Mulan persuaded Tanni over her easily overcome

resistance to leave the house and come to stay with her for a few days. When Wang Tamang was called in, she readily agreed to relieve Tanni for a few days and said that she and Yumei could easily look after the place. Gold Luck could carry messages to MuIm’s house, and Brocade said her son. Little Pie, could also run errands. Tanni left that very afternoon with Mnkn and her daughter.

Tliose were four wonderful days that Tanni spent at Mulah’s home. Alwajra at the back of her mind was the death of Pinpin. ^e was not in a mood to welcome the advent of Spring this year. But Spring had a secret magic power to make her cordial, besides stirring an unrest in her soul. Everywhere its breath "was in the air, coaxing tiny buds to come out without fear, caressing the mou nt ain azaleas into a reckless abandon of self-display, urging tiae peaches and chidi^ the plums, and brushing the golden hak of weeping willows in soft, long strokes. It was as if a painter had di^^d ^ brush and coveted the Wu-Han landscape generously with a pale yellowish-green, and then added thir ke r dabs of pink and ted here and there. People corning back ftom the country were seen carrying through the streets long, heavily-laden branches of mountain azalea.

Tanni was glad to be back in the dty once more, living so close to the busy streets. Living with Mulan’s ftmily was easy and without much constraint, and she came to know the family quite well. Never once did Mulan let her know that she knew her

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condition, and Tanni would never have had her suspect it. Sl^e wore her loose-fitting gowns which she had worn up on the hill. But sometimes when she was sitting quietly in the room, Mulan could see a distant expression in her eyes.

A telegram had come fitom Poya announcing his arrival at Kunming, where he was going to stay for two weeks. Without Tanni's knowledge, telegrams were sent to and ficom Kunming. One day when Sunya was going out to send a telegram, Tanni heard about it and asked him what he was doing. Stinya replied that he was sending a telegram to Kunming and merely smiled.

*'But to whom?" asked Tanni a litde anxiously.

"To Poya, of course."

Tanni blushed and said no more. Another day she heard that a telegram was despatched to Shanghai.

"Wast are all mese mysterious telegrams? Do they have some thing to do with me?" Tanni asked Mulan.

Mulan cast a playful, quizzical look at her and said, "There's a plot in the Yao fertdly. You don't have to know." After a brief

pause, she said, looking at Tanni out of the comers of her long ey6s, ''What do you thiok of my daughter?"

'T like her, of course."

"I mean, what do you think of her as a bridesmaid?"

Tanni flushed a litde. "I don't understand."

'T mean for her cousin's wedding. They are cousins, you know."

"Which cousin?" Tanni had guessed, but simulated innocence to cover up her excitement, while casting an exasperated look at Mulan.

"Qin't you guess? We have to think of your wedding."
Mulan finally broke the news to her with a teasing, scintillating smile.

The word "wedding" held a magic power for Tanni. She looked as if she had been strack dumb. Her throat was tight with happiness, and her &ce was flooded with a light of gratitude.

"Oh, Mrs. Tseng " she said with glistening eyes.

"Are you still calling me Mrs. Tseng? I'll soon be Poya's 'guardian' at the wedding. I meant to surprise you. These things

ought to be plotted behind the bride’s back, but I didn’t want to keep you too long in suspense.”

“But is it aU so simple? His wife — ^and aU that?”

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“It is being attanged. Afei is handling it. Isn’t it time for you to tTianlr yoUT aunt?”

Tanni buist into happy tears. don’t knour ho-w to find words

for my thanks,” she said.

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Worried about the house on Hungshan, Tanni went back on the fourth day. The visit with Mukn had done mudi to restore her spirit, but when she came back, she was struck with a sense of desolation. The house was running by itself. But Lao Peng and Pinpin were gone. When would Lao Peng return, and what was going to happen to this place? She had a sense of calamity, of something about to happen to Lao Peng. The more she thought of Ms departure, the more she became convinced that

she ^d driven him to self-exile. She did not merely miss him; now in Ms absence, the great qualities of tMs man became dearer to her. The memory of seeing him drunk and alone in Ms hotd room constantly came back to her and made her ill at ease. Perhaps now he was sufering alone in some hotd. When she happened to step into Ms room and saw Ms bed and the bundle of Ms dothing, she felt very tender towards him and was seized with a sense of self-reproach. When Poya's tdegram and letter came, she had never even stopped to consider whether her obligation to Lao Peng was at an end. T.ikft herself, he had it for granted and had sinqjly gone away. TMs saaifice on Ms |)art touched her more deeply even than Ms oflEsr to be fet her to her child.

She tried to picture Poya's return and her wedejing. She ought to be happy and she was not. Yes, she was to be married to Poya; he was young and handsome and wealthy, and she would have a comfortable home like Mulan's. But how much did she know of Poya? He would'design dresses for her and. parade her about, and she would live a life of entertainer to him. She felt a sudden revul-sion. The love that she had enjoyed and shared with Mm at Shang-hai could not satisfy her now. The shock on ^t night gt- t fr dance hall had left a permanent mark upon her, malring the mere love of the senses distastefuL She saw herself turning, ng^rp<^^ on the Wheel of Karma . . . . Was she again to wear the brassfere . . .?

She tried to talk with Yumei, although she did not tell her about

' at Mulan was planning.

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“Didn’t you promise to marry Unde Peng?” said Yumei.

“We have deddcd not to be married.”

You have jilted him? You are jilting that good

manl”

Tanni tried very hard to quiet her consdence. She went to see Pinpin’s fether, but there was nothing to be said between them. She remembered Pinpin’s wish and started to teach her brother the multiplication table ftom the multiples of eight. times ei^t an sixteen . . .”

But Pinpin’s voice came back and she could not go on. Pientse refused to learn any more, now that his sister was dead. It had ceased to be a game between two children, and had become only a process of perfunctory learning.

Sometimes during the night, Tanni would hear the muffled mourning of Ku for his lost daughter Pinpin, and the sound was hard to bear in the dark night on the hUl. The place became

insufferable for her. Suddenly she realized that every time Lao Peng left her, she got into trouble. If Lao Peng were here now, the house would become cheerful again.

On the same day there came Poya's first letter ftom Kunming, by air mail, and one ftom Lao Peng ftom Chengchow. To her own surprise, Tanni opened Lao Peng's letter first. When she had read through both, she realized why. From Pop's previous letters she had kamed what to espect: the enumeration of mountains and rivers with strange names, the altitudes of different^ peaks, the references to gorgeous scenery, awesome clifis, watersheds, hairpin curves, left her strangely cold. She could not read Poya's letter a second time, but she re-read Lao Pen^s again and again. It gave her a sense of familiarity and partnership that was warm and human. He spoke of Yumei and Wang Tammg and Pinpin, of whose death he had not heard, and he rebuked her a little for having neglected Yueh-o, the ugly lisdess girl who had been to a Christian school. He said almost nothing about himself, except that he had come bach ftom the region, north of the Yellow River.

She further surprised herself by taking a new interest after that in Yueh-o ^cause it was Lao Peng' s wish. And as days drew by she found that this girl whom she had passed almost unnoticed had something to teach her. To please her, she read a litde in the Christian Bible which Yueh-o had. One passage she read was this:

Tl»s is ny eommmiment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.

Greater hve hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for bis friends.

The -nrords made het diink again of Lao Peng, and the word “love” took on a new meaning in her quick mind.

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War fever had seized the population of Hankow. Day by day, &om March 28th to April 7th, unbelievable news of a great victory came from the front. For the first time in history, the Chinese Army had met the Japanese Army on the field and crushed it by superior tactics.

The promised April offensive was bearing surprising results. The city was electrified and humming with news of trapping and annihilation of the enemy. A great battle had started on the p lains aroimd Taierchuang on ManA 24th and continued to rage for a fortnight. It was the bitterest fighting since the Shanghai War. The enemy had sent a hundred thousand soldiers, incl uding the famous Fifth and Tenth Divisions from Shantung, converging

towards the great railway junction of Hsudiow in three directions from the north. Their left column approaching from the east had suffered a crushing defeat at T.ini on the fifteenth, at the hands of Generals Chang and Pang, which laid the basis for the Jater victory. Two main columns came down the Tientsin-Pukow Bailway. B^re the railway reached Hsuchow, there was a branch line forming a loop to the east, so that it resembled the letter b with the two lower points resti^ on the Lungjhai Railway which e^t and west. The straight line of the b represents the Tientsin-Pukow, with Hsuchow at the lower end. The curved line branches off eastward and curves down towards Taierchuang, on the north bank of the Grand Canal, which runs horizontal^ across through the two legs of the h. Three great lakes lie west of the Tientsin-Pukow R^way, along the entire length of the straight line. One enemy colunm came down the straight line and reached Hanchuang, which is also on the north of he Grand Qinal. As he terrain here rises into high hills, he enemy did not attempt to cross he Canal. The main central column struck east from Lincheng and followed he curved branch aiming at the capture of Taierchuang. Such tactics might be regarded as

”Ps-s-s-sdl Say that again,” asked litde Wanjan.

‘ ‘Ps-s-s-sdr" said Tanni obligingly with the same arm gesture.

Everybody laughed and the children all felt &miliar now with Tanni.

Little Wanjan was staring at the vermilion birthmark on her neck.

"^at is it you’ve got there?” the ddld asked. “May I touch it?”

Dimfcagrance’s drildren were like tibat, having been taught not to fear grown-ups.

course you may,” Tanni said and bent down toward Wanjan who touched it again and again in curiosity.

"You touch it,” she said to her sister.

Wanlo very much wanted to touch it and at the same time was afraid.

"You mustn’t be rude,” said Dimfeagrance, and so Wanlo did not touch it. But that night she lay in bed and regretted that she had not.

It was not politic for Lao Peng to suggest that Poya and Tanni had a plan to meet at Shanghai, or even that they were interested in each other. He said ra&er that he and Poya had planned to come down together, but that on account of the sudden tension in

the city, they were sqsarated. He said he was in a hurry to leave Shanghai and was waiting only to see Poya before he left. He therdfore asked Chinya to give his address at the Qiangfetsan to Poya, but to keep it secret from all others.

Back in their hotel, Lao Peng and Tanni passed the days only waiting for Poya's arrival. W^-to-do refugee families ftom all over the country had flooded the International Settlement and the French Gjneession, especially on Avenue Edouard VII, where the cheaper-class hotels, including the Changfetsan, clustered. The small lobby was piled to the ceiling with r^gees' baskets, bundles, and leather trunks. Even the ends of corridors were rented out as sleeping space, and outside the cement sidewalks of the Avenue Edouard VII served as the living and sleeping quarters of hordes of poor refugees.

Lao Peng roamed the streets, eating at cheap restaurants or roadside stands. The refugee situation was at its worst. The Japanese had broken through Taaang. Villagers who had clung to iheic homes all through the fighting now poured into the foreign setdements, not knowing where they were going. Men

and women risked being machine-gunned going over the Jessfield Bridge and Markham Road rather than meet certain

death in the path of the invaders. The long Avenue Edouard VII, with its broad sidewalks, attracted these crowds. The Great World amusement centre, whidb Tanni used to visit with her mother, had been turned into a great refugee camp where even space on the cement steps was assigned as sleeping places. Those who could not be accommodated still hung around the neighbour-hood in the hope of receiving gruel from the refugee kitchens.

Tanni avoided going out as much as possible. From her window at the hotel, she watched these hordes in their in-describable misery, and she learned to look at them with the eyes of Lao Peng. He was never without mantou [buns] and wheat cakes when he returned. Tanni, watching for his return, would see him distributing the mantou to the refugees, and they would fight for them, and Lao Peng always had to dodge and flee, and he would arrive panting in their room.

“The strong fellows always get it,” he said angrily. “The little ones have no chance at all. There is a woman with three skinny children — ^they are starving to death.”

“Can I take something to themi’” asked Tanni.

“You would be trampled to death. Yumei, you are strong. Take this doUar. Go down to a shop round the comer and buy the dollar’s worth of mantou — the cheapest. Take the basket and a towel and carefully cover it when you bring it home. Avoid the aowd and slip quickly into the hotel by the side door.”

When Yumei returned with the basketfiil of mantou, Lao Peng took a towel and wrapped a dozen in it and then hid it undemeaiH his long gown.

Tanni and Yumei watched from the window, and saw Lao Peng going up the street, avoiding the sidewalk, until a block away he came to where the woman with her three sick children was sitting on the ground. Stealthily but quickly he poured the mantou into the woman’s lap and tamed and ran,

A scramble began. Some of the refugees chased Lao Peng and others seeing the do;^ mantou set upon the woman arid her <Mdren. Pushed and jostled, the woman held to the mantou with the tenacity of a Honess, and the children yelled and fought. In the end, Tanni saw that the woman had saved three or four mantou and the rest had been stolen ftom her.

“WeU, did she get it?” asked Lao Peng, as he came in panting.

“She got a few,” said Tanni.

The nezt day, Tanni went down and told the woman to come to the hotel by the side dooi, but to follow only at a long distance.

The woman entered, wearing only a thin rag that did not cover her legs. She recognized Lao Peng and fell upon the floor to worship him. She was assisted up and shown the basket of memtou.

“Eat aU you like,” said Lao Peng.

The woman’s hands shook as they dug into the pile.

“There is no hurry,” said Lao Peng. “Sit down.”

He took all the mantou fcom her except one, and forced her to sit on a chair. Then he poured a glass of tea and handed it to her.

“Oh, I am unworthy,” said the old woman. “My children . . .”

“Never mind your children. You eat first.”

“She is sick,” said Tanni.

“Sick?” roared Lao Peng. “She is bun^. That is the matter with her. She will not be sick when she is fed. You don’t understand bun^r^ do you?” His voice suddenly became soft again. ^‘Yes, just hunger.”

“Yes, just hunger,” the woman repeated dully.

When she had eaten, she was sent away and told to send her

children up, and Tanni would be waiting at the side door to take them in. J

This was repeated daily, and Lao Peng would pick up others and serve them in the same manner, and no refugee knew that others had also been fed, nor did they know who it was that saved" their lives.

Tanni, daily waiting for the arrival of Poya, became impatient before three days were over, and urged Lao Peng to call again on his relatives. But Lao Peng replied that Poya would certainly come to see her the moment he arrived and learned their address.

These were also the days when all Shanghai was stirred by the heroic stand of the Lone Battalion. Despite the withdrawal of the Qiinese force from Chapei and the Japanese occupation of the area, a rear-guard of some five hundred men of the Eighty-eighth Division, under Colonel Sieh Chinyuan, still held out at the warehouse of the Joint Savings Bank, standing on the northern bank of the Soochow Creek. In spite of repeated offers by British and American military authorities to give them sanctuary in the International Settlement if they would cross the creek and

surrender their arms, this group of gallant men continued to hold

out, the Japanese throwing hand grenades into the building, and the Lone Battalion sniping at the Japanese jEcom the windows. It was a heavy reinforced concrete bmlding and, being situated in the street, was difficult to attack with big guns, "nie Japanese built scaffolds on the roofs of neighbouring houses to fire at it.

Crowds turned out to see the exchange of gunshots from the Settlement side of the creek, and Tanni went to see it with Yumei. She was in time to see a Chinese girl scout braving the gunfire and creeping along the banks to carry a big Chinese flag to the Lone Batson. The girl was given rousing cheers by the spectators when she came back. The flag was hoisted on the roof of the building, proudly waving in the sombre sky. A feeble sun broke out from &e clouds and cast a golden ray upon the red and blue, a symbol of the glorious courage of the Chinese people. Tears dropped fi:om Tanni’s cheeks.

Immensely stirred by the flag, by the glimpse of the Chinese sharpshooters in their helmets, and by that girl in her brown scout shirt and black skirt, she was inspired with a new pride in her people. She was glad she had run away from Tientsin and Peiping. She loved China more than ever before.

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Poya still had not arrived and Lao Peng hims elf was getting

impatient. Seven days had passed since their visit at the Bur-
lington. They had mought that they did not know Afei and
Chinya well enough to bother them, but at last Lao Peng was
urged to telephone to the hotel.

"No, Poya has not come yet.”

The next day they went and saw Afei again in order to suggest
that he send a telegram. That was the thirtieth of October. Afei
agreed to send a telegram but he said that milit ary despatches had
precedence and it might take several days.

Every hour Ta nni hoped for word. There was heavy rain
during these days, and the misery in the wet streets, where the
refugees wandered from place to place to seek shelter, or simply
stood in the rain, combined to make her more miserable. Then bn
the fourth day, a reply came from Peiping that Poya and his wife
would leave on the seventh and arrive in Shanghai around the
twelfth or thirteenth, the steamer schedule being highly uncertain.

The picture of the war had changed in the last week. The
Chinese had abandoned Chapei on the twenty-seventh after
seventy-six days of heroic resistance, making an orderly retreat in
the night. The enemy discovered it only the next morning when

all Chapei was in flames. Fighting had shifted to the western outskirts.

But on the fifth of November, the Japanese landed at Chapoo in Hangchow Bay, threatening to come up and cut the railway and the Qiinese right flank based on Hangchow. The Japanese were driving toward Sungkiang. A new Chinese line would have to be established, extending eighty-five miles around the Tai Lake. Communications with Nanking were increasingly difficult.

Lao Peng could not decide what he should do. If he waited until Poya arrived, perhaps communications with the inland would be altogether cut off, except by the long and circuitous southern route which would be too expensive according to Lao Peng’s standard of living. He did not want to stay in Shanghai while the war was moving into the interior.

The war does strange things to people. It swept Tanni out of her sheltered life in Tientsin and threw her into the conqiany of Lao Peng and Yumei, who had been total strangers to her only a few we^s ago. The more Lao Peng saw of Tanni the more he thought she would be a good wife for Poya. She had all the little_ irrelevancies that made a fidrly competent housewife, and the way she tyrannized over his personal habits showed her as a woman with normal instincts. She loved orderliness and with Yumei she managed to make their little room clean and livable, in contrast to the vast diisorder outside. With a housewife’s cunning, little

objects were tucked away and parcels made to disappear; me soft was always left dear of encumbrances; and Tanni always put the stopper back in the thermos bottle, which he often absent-mindedly left open. He had never doubted that she was of warm and passionate nature and would make a good lover for Poya. When she spoke of going somewhere to live with Poya, just by themsdves, there was an enthusiasm in her voice which showed her to be an idealist. But all the idealism in the world would be of no avail, if the thermos bottle were constantly left open, or the can opener dways misplaced.

They' had only a small room -with two beds. The curtained bed afforded the only privacy for the women, but it was not much since the hotel provided loose modern bed curtains for purposes of ventilation. Their real privacy was the darkness at night and they always undressed after the light was turned out. ITie one most embarrassed by this was Yumei.

In the daytime, I^o Peng was usually out, roaming the streets. He was as oblivious of his food and dress as anyone could be, his scientific rule being to eat only when he was hungry. Since his hunger came at odd intervals, his meals were irregular. Some-times he would come home late, and Tanni would ask him

whether he had eaten, and he would say he had, and then half an hour later when he felt hungry he would say that he now remembered he had had no supper.

His only regular meal was breakfest. Tanni persuaded him to drink a glass of milk every morning and she saw that he got it. He always laughed at city luxuries and hated the extravagances of modem living, but, having at one time planned to set up a dairy farm, and having read a great deal about it, he did believe in miTlr So the glass of milk always stood on his breakfest table.

“Don’t forget your milk,” Tanni would say. "We We no way of knowing what you eat during the day.”

Lao Peng laughed. “What do I eat during the day? Don’t be foolish. We aU eat too much for our own good. What do the common people and beggars’ children eat? Our life is all wrong. If you do hard work and move about until you ate really hungry, you can eat anything and turn it into food for the body ...”

But he was to^ed by the solicitude of Tanni for his welftre. Tanni, in her childish adoring way, would see that he got a hot towel after breakfest, and would ask him to stand still while she brushy his gown for him before he left.

“Why don’t you wear that hat I bought you?”

“I never wear a hat.”

“But it may rain and you may catch cold.”

“Don’t worry. Tve got along without a hat all my life.” And Lao Peng would leave without a hat.

“He is so stubborn,” said Tanni.

But as a matter of feet, Lao Peng had begun to get used to what he called the women’s “tyranny.” Tanni constantly emptied die ash-trays, a silent reproach to him. The women

took it to be their natural duty to make up his bed before break-fest was, served. They saw to the laundry and they asked for his used handkerchief every morning. The first few times, Lao Peng said he could wash it hims elf, but Tanni said it was a woman’s job.

“We are young people and you should be served,” she added.

Lao Peng was pleased at this respect due to his age, and thereafter he obediently produced his used handkerchief from the bulging pocket beneath his gown.

*T can always tell what he ate the day before by smelling his handkerchief,” Tanni laughed to Yumei. “Yesterday he ate oil twists and doughnuts — ^there is a smell of ftied oil. The day before he ate tsungtse — ^the gliitinous rice stuck on his handkerchief.”

“He is a kind person,” remarked Yumei.

“Yes, but stubborn. I couldn’t make him have a haircut.”

“Both of you are kind,” said Yumei. “It is my luck to find you. You deserve a good husband.”

“You will see him soon,” said Tanni, smiling.

“Is he handsome — and very rich?” asked YumeL

It amused Tanni that Yumei was so much interested in her marriage. Yumei was a strong peasant girl, with a healthy complexion and an equally healdiy instinct. ’O^en she talked of marriage, her checks became rounder and ruddier than ever, and her eyes narrowed. Tanni had prevented her from brooding and had reassured her about the coming baby, and she had stopped worrying. Tanni had spent two or three dollars on socks and shoes for her, and in a fit of extravagance had bought her another dress. Ytimei was living in a luxury she had not known before. She was curious about everything Tanni used — ^her creams and her modem rouge, and an article dmt greatly puzzled her when she first saw it — the br assifere.

“What is that for?” she had asked.

Tanni had explained carefully. “Qiinese women for many years have bound themselves tightly as you do so that their breasts will not show.”

“Yes,” said Yumei. “So my mother said we ought to d.o.”

“But now it is th e fashion to l i ft one’s br e asts, h igh md pnintfifl/ ’ Tanni hMifated, seeing Yumei’s state. “Men seem to like us so,” she went on defiantly. "And that is why we wear the brassiere,” she finished, somewhat lamely.

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“It shames one to death,” Yumei exclaimed, sharply, and she blushed as if she was going to die, “Siaocbiebt you are a respectable person.”

Tanni smiled. “Even respectable ladies in the dty wear it now.”

Tanni was washing her brassihre and when she had finished, she handed it to Yumei to hang it to dry near the stove. Yumei took it as though it were the widredest thing on earth and looked at it uneasily,

“We mustn’t let him see it,” she said. “It shames one to death!”

That afternoon, there was a pouring rain. Lao Peng had gone out to help in a small Buddhist temple where wounded soldiers were being treated. The fighting was now in the western out-skirts of Shanghai, and the BuddHst monks were doing their part by organizing ambulance squads to carry the woimded ftom the batdefield. Lao Peng returned in the afternoon, his hair and clothing drenched through.

“Take your gown off. Let me dry it for you,” said Tanni
“G)me sit near Sie fire. You mi^ht catch a death of a cold.” '

She pulled up a chair. The brassi^e was still hanging on the chak-back. Yumei snatched it and thrust it hurriedly under a pillow. "Kais^e! One ought to did” she muttered to herself.

Lao Peng took off his gown, and Tanni felt it and found that the rain had soaked through the padded cotton. She gave him a towel and told him to dry his hair, and was scandalized to see him dty his feet with the fece towd.

“You must get into a dry warm bed,'’ she said.

He went to bed obediendy and she tucked him in comfortably.

“When therain stops, I am going away,”hesaid almost to himself ,

“Aren’t you waiting for Poya?” asked Tanni, surprised.

Lao Peng seemed to read her thoughts, and he said slowly:
‘TTou stay here and wait for him. I don’t want to be caught in Shanghai. I’U see his people before I go and make sure that he gets in touch with you when he arrives. You stay here with Yumei. Nothing can happen to you. I shall see you again in Hankow.”

Tanm knew that Lao Peng had already gone out of his way to bring hen to Shanghai, and did not think it proper to push the question further.

The rain continued and most of the refugees on the streets had mys^ously disappeared. Only a few still straggled along, having no place to go, and knowing that one place was as wet as

i6a

another. Lao Peng got out of his bed and stood before the ■window, looking do'wn at the boulevard, reflecting, lost in thought. The rain was beating upon the panes, and once in a while the sparks from the ■wires over the passing street cars' would flash a purple light across his profile. Now and then they could hear a car blowing its horn.

“A dry bed,” he said to himself with a sigh, and tamed and went back to his bed.

The women ■waited until he was quiet, then turned oflF the light and undressed in bed.

About midnight, Tanni was bothered by bedbugs. She got up stealthily and groped for a flashlight. The sound woke Lao Peng, who was a light sleeper.

"What is it?” he asked.

“Bugs,” she replied.

"Turn the light on. You can’t find them ■with that flashlight.”

“I’m afraid the light -will bother you.”

“Never mind me. I am awake, too.”

She got up, lighted a cigarette, and slipped on her quilted gown and sat on the sofa.

“I ■want to talk with you,” she said. Her feet were exposed, and she took a sweater and curled up her feet and covered them with it.

‘TTou’d better get in bed or you’ll catdi cold. The stove has gone out.”

'Tve got an ideal” she said. “I can sleep on the sofr to-night.”

She jumped up again and lugged her bedding and pillow to the sofe. Yumei turned in her bed and said: “What’s the trouble?”

“I am going to sleep on the sofe. You go ahead and sleep.”

She stretched herseu on the sofe, covering herself ■with the bed-ding. With her go^wn still on, unbuttoned, she raised her piUow so ^t she could half sit up and talk comfortably ■with Lao Peng.

“Are you really going a^way and not waiting for him?” sheasked.

''Yes. The railway to Hangchow is already cut off. Everyday’s delay makes it more difficult to get away.”

“You promised to speak to Poya for me,” she said.

“I should have been glad to,” he said, slowly. “But you can tell him everything exactly as you have told it to me. You can tell it better than I am. I know Poya. He will understand.”

“You probably don’t know why I am so afraid. I suppose you have never been in love.”

‘T do know. Poya is a splendid fellow, but he is restless and he is wasting his life. He needs one like you. When you have each other, he will be happy. . . . You stay here, and when you can, come to Hankow.- May I ask you something?”

“What?” she asked.

'T have been watching you carefully, Tanni. You are a good woman for Poya. If you two can get away, have you ever thought what you are going to do?”

‘Tve never thought of that.”

“Something for others, not yourselves. Poya is very rich. To help the war victims, the poor, the suffering, the wounded, the homeless — ^would you approve of Poya’s doing this?”

"Of course. I suppose I have lived a selfish life. But I never had a chance.”

Lao Peng, raising himself, said affectionately: “Poya is unhappy in his marriage, and therefore unhappy with himself and everything. He told me he could not imagine his wife going inland with him. You understand that I have no sympathy whatsoever for the selfish rich. That was enough for me as fer as his wife is con-

cerned. Poya’s trouble is his marriage.”

“And you think I could help him?” asked Tanni.

“I do think so. He needs a bright, sweet spirit like you. You
• can make him very happy. And don’t forget that he is very ridi. I trust you to help him spend his money in the right way, to help others — ^the only right way for rich people to spend money.”

“Oh, I promise,” she cried. “There will be nothing better. That will be an ideal life for me.” There was a tone of endiusiasm in her voice. Lao Peng was pleased.

“Come, give me your hand,” said Lao Peng, and she got up ‘ficom her sofii and extended her hand. Lao Peng grasped it. .

”1 promise,” she said again, sitting on the edge of his bed.

Holding her hand he said; ^‘Your feet will be cold. Put them under here.” He shifted his position and she tucked her legs under the lower comer of his bed-quUt.

“Do you know that I am helping one woman to rob another of her husband?” he said. “Why am I doing it? Very ftankly, for the •common people. Pojra is a very unusual person. I have seen enough or life to know that a woman can m^e or untnalfe a man. A woman is a jewel or trash. You will make him happy, and you’ll •be the making of him.”

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"Are you sure. Uncle Peng?” said Tanni, trembling.

"I am sure,” he replied, now relaxing his hand. "But love between man and woman is selfishness, if it is not the basis for loving and helping others. Tanni, you have seen the refugees in the street. Multiply them by tens of thousands, and you know what is happening inland. This is the great chance for people who have money. A foil stomach and shelter — ^that is what the homeless want. A dry warm bed. What is simpler than that? But to give it to them — ^that is the highest happiness.”

Lao Peng spoke so earnestly, his voice was so unaffected and sincere, that Tanni was deeply touch^.

**Uncle, you have taught me something I never knew before. I have thought only of m3rself. You make me feel ashamed of myself.”

"I have not been wrong about you,” he said.

“How can we find you in the interior?”

“I shall be going up the river with the refugees. The best

address I can give you is the Qiungfoo Money Shop. They will forward letters. Now go to bed. The bugs will not bother you if you don’t thmk about them.”

“I don’t care for bugs now,” she said happily.

Tanni turned to put out the light and groped back to her sofa. He heard her pat her bedding in the dark.

"Uncle Peng,” she said, after a while.

“Don’t talk now.”

“I am too happy. Do you ever pray at the temple?”

"I never pray.”

“I wish you could pray for me. You make me feel that I am the happiest woman in the world.”

"Buddha will bless you. Now sleep.”

CHAPTER XI

Lajo Peng left for Nanking on November the eighth, just a day before the Chinese forces completed their withdraw^ from the western suburbs of Shanghai. Tanni and Yumei saw him off at

the hotel, and they promised to meet at Hankow. Tanni asked him to write to her, and he said he would, but he did not know

how mails would reach Shanghai. Lao Peng seemed to feel more than he cared to show, as he repeated softly, trying to smile: “It’s all tight ... we shall see each other in Hankow — ^in Hankow.” The sky had cleared, and Tanni and Yumei stood at the hotel door and waved &rewell until they could see his shaggy head and slightly bent shape no mote. The sight of this midfie-aged tnari leaving alone and apparently on foot for the war area touched them both, especially when they remembered why he went. Only after he was gone did Tanni realize how much she had got used to his company.

A week later Poya arrived at Shanghai with his wife. Kainan’s parents lived in an alley off Avenue Fodh in what was considered a comfortable middle-class home. It was a grey-brick building set inside a “terrace” with cement pavement, and unbelievably ugly on the outside. The houses were so close together that twenty femilies lived within a terrace of one acre. So did most of the rich conservative class live in Shanghai, deriving a sense of security from being crowded by neighbours on all sides in preference to more poetic but less secure locations in the oudying districts. The interior of the house was also comfortably furnished, as

Kainan had been able to send money home to her parents. Poya was treated with all the respect due to a rich son-iu-law, and Mrs. Hsia, Kain a n ’s old mother, had prepared the best southern room on the third floor for her daughter and son-in-law. Poya had intended to take a hotel room, but, seeing that his wife’s frmily had gone to so much trouble, he decided to stay there temporarily.

Mrs. Hsia’s welcome was sincere. '“Poya, I haven’t seen you for three years. Don’t say that my house is not good enough for you. Of course, it cannot compare with your Peiping home . .

“All right, I will stay. Mother,” he replied.

That afternoon he went with Kainan to the Burlington to see his relatives.

There was the usual excitement that comes with the meeting of relatives. Qiinya’s and Afei’s families crowded into one room to ask questions about the conditions in Peiping. All three women were talking simultaneously in that quickened tempo of women’s conversation when everyone is talking as well as listening to the others. Conversation was carried on in the same manner as are knocked about by tennis players warming up before the ggfn<>^ when two balls are served simultaneously from the opposite aidpg,

and each player is too pleased with the chance to warm up his own muscles to bother where his opponent’s ball lands. Continuity of movement, rather than logical sequence, was the rule. A flow of words was shot across the room, irrespective of who was listening, and if there was time to v^tch the opposite flow of words, it could be caught and struck at, as it were, on the second bounce.

‘'Yes,” said Dim&agrance, without suggesting whether the “yes” was the opening of a new topic or fie continuation of a previous one, “you’ve seen nothing of what we saw. Guns were roaring on both sides of the river when we landed, and the sky was filled with black smoke. . . . Wanlo, let your mother talk.

, . . It is the young men who are not afraid Wanping wanted to join the army when he saw his cousins going. Mulan and Mochow were both here with us two months ago to see Hsiaofii and Atung off to the firont. His &tier had a hard time preventing him from joining them. ... He is only eighteen. You see he is outgrowing his clothes and he is already helping his fether to keep &e femily accoimts . . .”

Afei suggested that the men go into Chinya’s room. “We can talk better dere, don’t you think?”

Chinya was dressed in a simple Chinese gown. He asked Poya to take the armchair, while he sat erect on a desk chair.

Afei, sitting on the edge of a bed, said: “You remember your firiend Mr. Peng?”

“Yes, where is he?” asked Poya, eagerly.

“He came last week and left a message saying that he must leave for Nanking while it was still possible. He said his niece was staying bdiind and he left me her address. You are to go to see her or call her up. She is at Changfetsan. She is a very pretty young lady. Her name I think is Tanni.”

“Tanni?” asked Poya in surprise.

“Yes, Tanni.”

“What is she like?”

“Rather bewitdiing, and very entertaining. The children loved her. She said she had stayed in our home as Lola’s guest.”

“I understand,” said Poya, his fiice melting into a snule. “The girl who stayed in our house— Mr. Peng’s niece, as you say— was named MaUn. But I am sure you are speaking of the same lady. It is aU very mysterious. She was planning to come down with us, and then — she changed her mind and came with Lao Peng. She

was mixed up with the Japs in something. But I don't believe a word of it. I am a little worried for her. I must see her and find out how Mr. Peng left."

After they had talked about a few business matters, Poya rose to go-

"By the way," he said to Afei, "Kainan rather does not like her. I shall come back for supper, but don't tell Kainan where I am going, you understand?"

Afei looked at him and smiled.

In the other room, hardly had five minutes passed after the men left, when Kainan was deep in the sensational story of Malin.

"Do you know we nearly got into trouble with the police? In Septem^, Aunt Lola invited a ftiend of hers to stay at our house. There was a great mystery about her and she stayed on and on. Her name is Malin. She was to come down wi& us. Nobody could get her or Aunt Lola to teU where she came from. Tsien rather took a ftncy to her, and I could see that Poya was flirting with her. You know the way he is with women. She is pretty, with deep dark eyes, and very viTOcious, and she has a red birth-mark on her neck."

“Why, that’s Miss Pengl” aied Wanlo.

“What Miss Peng?” asked Kainan. “Have you seen her?”

"We all did,” exclaimed the other children.

“She is the Rattlesnake Lady. Ps-s-s-sdl” said Ichu.

“Let the grown-ups talk,” chided Dimftagrance. “But that is Miss Peng, I am sure. What was her name, children?”

“Tanni,” said Wanlo.

“What Tanni? She is Tsui Malin. Didn’t I say she was a mysterious woman? She is a runaway concubine and she is wanted by the police,” said Kainan in an esaggerated whisptt, with lilting emphasis on the words “runaway concubine.”

“But she is such a nice ladyl” interrupted Wanlo.

K a inan went on dramatit^y with her story. “So she has changed her namel A few days after she left, the police ram.- to our house with a warrant for her. They showed a tpl^gram j&om Tientsin saying that she had run away with her husband’s jewels and money, I forget how many tens of thousands. Luckily she was not in the house at the time, otherwise we would be in trouble with the police. You see how dangerous it is to have any firalmg

with a woman of that class. Anyone could see she was tba«- Trin.^ of

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a woman— not like good femily girls. I tell you, she is tat Mr..
Peng’s niece. When the Japanese searched our house, she was-
firightened and ran away that very night to stay with Mr. Peng.”

“Ohl” said Paofen, drinking the wine of gossip with ecstasy.

"Anyway I like her,” said Wanlo in hot defence.

^“Mother,” said little Wanjan, "why do the police want the lady
who said Ps-s-s-st^"

“And she told us she had been with the guerrillas and had been-
fighting the Japs,” said Diung.

"How can she be a bad woman?” protested Wanlo.

‘T don’t know what kind of a past a woman of that class has
had,” remarked tCainan. ‘Is she still here?”

don’t know,” replied Paofen. "I heard from my husband
that Mr. Peng has left.”

Afei and Qiiaya returned at this moment and saw that the wotoM were enjoying what they were talking about.

“Didn’t Mr. Peng come to say good-bye and say he was leaving, for Nanking?” Paofen asked her husband.

"Yes, he left a week ago.”

"Is his niece still here?”

"Ah, you are talking about herl She is still here.”

“Where is she staying?” asked Kainan.

Afei looked at her and said: "I don’t know. . . . Of course, you will have supper with us. Poya has gone out for some-business and will join us later.”

Poya, impatient to see Tanni, took a taxi to her hotel. He was told that Mr. Peng had left, but his family was still there. He went up and knocked at the door, his heart bating fast.

Yumei opened the door.

“I want to see — er — Miss Peng.”

“She is not in,” said Yumei, slamming the door.

Then the door suddenly opened again. "But you are siaocbieVs ftiend, aren’t you?” said Yumei, apologizing excitedly. “Come in. She has been expecting you and waiting for you all these days.”

“Who are you?” asked Poya.

“I am slaying with her. My name is Yumei. Sit down. Siaocbieb will be very glad to see you.”

"Where is she?” asked Poya.

"She has gone out to take a walk.”

Yumei poured tea and offered him a cigarette, while he sat

watdbung and asking her questions. He could not quite account for her, except that she was a country girl.

“How long have you been staying with her?”

"We came together all the way from Peiping.”

She ran to the window to see if Tanni were coming, and then came back and stood facing Poya with a smile on her ruddy

cheeks.

“You are firom Peiping?” she said.

“Of course.”

“Are you a relative to Mr. Peng?”

“No, why?” Poya was amused.

''Didn’t Mr. Peng bring siaochieb down for you?”

“What makes you think so?”

“Well, siaochieb said she was not a relative of Mr. Peng. I could not understand. So he must be a relative of yours. A good man he is, that Mr. Peng.”

Poya was impatient at her questions, but as she talked on, he became interested. “Every day since we arrived,” she continued, *'siaochiib has been waiting for news from you. So when I heard them talking, I imagined what kind of a gentleman it was to have the luck of marrying such a pretty lady.”

“Well, are you <hsappointed?”

^‘Usenmol You really make a pair. And she is lucky, too, to marry a gentleman like you. Are you an ofEcial?”

“No.”

“Siaochieb told me you are very rich, and live in a big garden.”

"Oh! Is that aU?”

“Well, you must be. How could a person who is not very rich marry a pretty lady like her? When is the wedding?”

Poya was displeased and did not reply, and Yumci, a little embarrassed, walked back to the window to watch for Tanni.

Suddenly she recognized Tanni’s footsteps in the hallway, and ran to open the door.

Tanni, at the sight of Poya standiog close before her, dropped her parcels on the floor and cried:

“Oh, Poya, you have cornel”

“Lien-erhl”

“niey embraced and kissed each other, and Yumei blushed smiled at the same time.

“Who is she?” asked Poya.

“A refugee girl. I met her in the 'Western Hills,” answered Tanni, as she held Poya’s hand and drew >iim down with her on the sofe.

‘T have almost died waiting for you,” she said, ''Where are you staying?”

“At my wife’s home.”

Yumei gave such an audible gasp that Poya looked at her. Tanni said: “Yumei, you go out for a walk for an hour. I have something to talk over with Yao shaoyeb” Yumei blushed all over and left the room, disappointed.

They sat looking into one another’s eyes. It was at once a satis&ction of the longing and yearning that had gone before and a reassurance of all that was to come.

“Oh, Poya, at lastl You haven’t forgotten me?”

“How could I?”

“Not for one moment?”

“Not for one moment,”

She kissed him again. “You look thinner.”

“Do I? Tell me what happened to Lao Peng.”

“He left for Nanking a week ago. . . . Oh, don’t talk about Tiim. Don’t talk about anybody but ourselves. Is this the beginning now? I will not be parted ftom you again.” She sat closer to him talking both to him and to herself. “Uncle Peng showed me how we could lead an ideal life. We will go inland and work with him and help the war victims. That is what he is going to do now. He said he had spoken to you. . . . And we will go somewhere — where nobody knows us, and we need not cate what other people say , .

“So you plamied it all with Lao Peng,”

“Yes, He said you agree with him. He said you were very rich and we could help the poor and homeless. Won’t that be a ^ppy life for us? How rich are you?”

Now what Poya most hated was to be called rich, and it was the second time he had heard that remark in the last half-hour.

“Why do you want to know?” he said, rather drily.

“I never thought much about it before. But Uncle Peng open^ my eyes. Money could do so much good — Whelping people. It is terrible, what I have seen of the refugees on the streets here.”

“You said you wanted to talk of ourselves. Now you arc talkifig of the refugees.”

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“I am telliag you ■what our life together may be. It "was Lao Peng’s idea. We -will go -wherever we please — ^just you and me and Lao Peng.”

“You are p lannin g very &r ahead,” said Poya, a little coldly.

“Don’t you approve?”

“Of course I do. Only ... it is not so simple. You caught me by surprise. . . . Lien-erh, why did you change your name to Tanni?”

“To be safe. I told you I was afraid of the Japs.”

“That is what I want to ask you. Will you answer me very truthfully?”

‘Tfes,” answered Tanni, trembling a little. She had dreaded the crisis when she must tell her story, and she had told herself that she would tell it to him as she had told Uncle Peng. But it was to be in a soft light and when all was right for it. Now he -was going to ask the question, and her heart shook.

“Lien-erh, be truthful with me. Were you someone’s con-cubine?”

Shelookedathis worried &ce and hesitated and then said: “Yes.”

“Did you really run a'way” — ^he could not look at her, but lowered his eyes — “as the report says — with jewels and money?”

Tanni flared. “Certainly not. Do you believe that of me?”

“Don’t be angry,” continued Poya, uneasily. “I never believed it myself.”

“Yes, yes!” cried Tanni, *T ran away ... I was a kept woman ... I told you that everythiug a woman docs is al-ways ■wrong. . . . Now you believe that of me!” She broke do-wn crying. “I -wanted to tell you the whole story, but I had no chance.”

He had never seen her weep before and, strangely, he did not like it. He loved her, but her tears only annoyed him because they made it impossible to clear the question in his mind.

“Lien-erh,” he said softly. '“Don’t cry . . . I love you -with all my heart . . . but you must talk reasonably . . .”

But she continued sobbing. “They say in the newspapers that I ran a-way with jewels and money . . . and you believe it ...”

Poya bent and kissed her. He knew that to argue with a crying woman -was useless, and that the best arguments were kisses affection.

“Lien-erh — ^you must listen to me. . . . ItmakesnodifiTerence to me what others say or what you have done. I love you. Come, look up at me.”

She opened her eyes and wiped them. She felt that she had made a bad beginning. She had told her story very well to Uncle Peng, but she could not remember how she lud said it. When Poya had demanded an e:q3lanation, his manner had made her angry and less sure of herself. But the real reason for the difference between her success with Lao Peng and this confusion in the presence of Poya was that she had not cared so much what Lao

Peng thought. She had planned to begin, “Poya, I cannpt marry you.” Thus she would be in a stronger position, but she could not say it, because it would be insincere. She had imagined that she would continue with the story where she had left off— that v^s the way she had told Uncle Peng. What she did not understand was that in the telling of a story the person spoken to is as important as the speaker. Lao Peng had given her self-confidence, and Poya had not. She had felt that she could confess anything to Uncle Peng and he would have understood and forgiven. So now, she merely asked Poya:

“How did you hear that I was a runaway concubine?”

“That was what I was going to tell you, but you never gave me a chance.' Five days raer you left, the police came with a warrant to arrest you and gave your name, Tsui Malin. They showed a telegram from the Tientsin puppet police.”

Tanni interrupted. “You cannot believe the Tientsin police — they ate tools of the traitors and the Japs. If I am wanted by the Japs, could I be so very bad?”

“Lien-erh, I told you I don’t believe the story. I care only for your safety. The feet is that you are wanted by the police. ’When I realized that, I was worried about you — ^not that I beheved tTifim. And that was why I wanted to ask you — ^to know how to help you. I wanted to hear the story from yourself. Do you see, my beautiful slave?”

Poya’s tone was tender, and his calling her “beaudful slave,” as in Peiping, pleased her, and she smiled.

“You must never doubt my love for you,” he went on.

‘hJo, Poya, we must never doubt each other,” she said. “I will tell you everything. Do you remember the night when you were talring me to Uncle Peng’s house, and in the dark

alley we pledged ourselves to love one another for ever and ever?”

“Yes, I remember. And you asked me to slap you.”

“And you couldn’t,” she said happily.

“I would rather t^t my hand rot than that it should ever slap you.”

“Oh, Poya, you are my lover, aren’t you? Yes, I will tell you. . . .”

“I don’t want to hear. What difference is it to me so long as

we love each other?”

“But I must teU you everything.”

“Later, if you like, when we are married. It makes no difference to me.”

“Does it really make no difference?”

*‘None whatsoever.”

“Oh, Poya, I have misjudged you. . . . But I must tell you now. I — was — a kept woman. I lived with — several men, after I left my husband. ... I felt I was unworthy of you. 'N^en I thought of you I felt ashamed. I was eaten with a bitter regret that I could not offer you a pure love like other girls. I imagined, if I married you, how your family and your ftiends would talk nnd say things about you and me and how I would drag you down. . . .”

"lien-erh, do not be foolish, imagining aU those things. What do I care what others say? You never asked me to tell you every-thing of my past. Why should I ask you to tell me yours? There have been women in my life, as there have been men in yours. You have been a kept woman, and I have kept women. Shall I tell you now what women I have lived with?”

“No, later, when we are married,” said Tanni, repeating what

he had said. More at ease, she went on, ^t is strange, isn’t it? A kept woman is laughed at. But a man who keeps a woman is not. Why is tihat?”

“Nobody knows.”

“Who can change that?”

“Nobody.”

She took out her handkerchief and Poya took it and wiped her eyes for her.

“Oh, Poya, if I had not met you,” she said, '*1 think I’d never be able to marry.” Then she went on more g^y, “Can we spend

this evening togethet? I want to make you happy in evcty way I know.”

“1 promised to have supper with my relatives at the hotel.”

''C^’t you tell them you cannot come?”

“No, I must not. . . . Yes, I willl I musti” He rose and

hurried down to the telephone.

While he was gone, Yumei returned.

“Siaoebteb” she said, “you have been crying? What is the matter?”

T am so happy.”

"But, is he married already?”

“Yes. But, Yvimei, do not ask questions, and if anyone asks you questions, you must say that you know nothing.”

'^es, siaochieb.”

Now Poya returned and said happily that he had told his unde that he would go directly to his wife’s home after supper and that Kainan was to go home alone in a taxicab.

As they went out, Yumei asked, “Where are you going?”

“You must not ask questions,” said Tanni, gently. “You have your supper and I will come back.”

Yumei smiled and blushed again.

Poya took Tanni to another hotel.

When they returned to the Chang&tsan at ten o’dock, Yumei saw that Tanni’s eyes were bright and on her fece were the beauty and peace that come from satisfied love, as Nature intended.

The next tnnming when Tanni sat before the dressing table, mmhing her hair, Yumei saw her looking into the mirror for a long time, and she went and looked at her red birthmark.

“That ^s not changed colour,” said Yximei.

“Of course not,-” said Tanni. “It is a natural mark.”

But the peace on Tanni’s fece was gone, and in its place were longing and desire. For Tanni felt as if she had lost a part of herself.

* *

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The following week was one of delirious happiness for Tanni, and for Poya, whenever he was with her. Since her address was known to his relatives, he urged her to take a suite in a hotel near the Race Course, and after a few days, he took a room in a hotel near by. They saw each other at least once a day, but as

Yumei was in the way, they sometimes met in his toom, which they kept as a secret rendezvous. Sometimes he would come and spend the whole afternoon, and sometimes the whole evening. She was happiest when he was able to come for a chat in the morning also, for on those days she could see him twice.

Poya was an extravagant lovet, lavish with presents. He was interested in women’s clothes, and he took a special deUght in buying her pretty nightdresses at the shops on Yates Road, more than she co^d ever use. They seldom went out together. Tanni had run away with only a little of her best clothing, and she went shopping alone for materials. But Poya bought her materials also, and did not neglect to choose the trimmings to match. He had a great success with one dress of grey worsted with faint lines, set off with a lavender trimming that he had chosen. He had a pendhant for costume jewellery, and he laughingly said that he would 'make an excellent dress designer if he ever needed a job. He had a theory about women’s dress; and he had a feeling for shades of colour, and for the touch and feel of materials. He would have nothing to do with inferior materials as a good cook will have nothing to do with bad meat; only the best fabric could keep its form and at the same time lend itself to the woman’s body and its soft modulations, so that clothes and body would har-monize into a perfect figure, the clothes borrowing beauty ftom the body and the body borrowing beauty ftom the clothes —

distinct, yet inseparable. But while the dress material must be good, costume jewellery was used chiefly for contrasting eflSKX and need not be intrinsically valuable. Tanni, on the other cared only for genuine jewellery, and particudarly for good jade. But Poya’s litde attentions pleased her, and she took them genercnisly as the offerings of love.

She had less chance tp minister to Poya’s needs than she had had in her care of Lao Peng. Poya had everything, and his personal attire was almost perfect. As she ramp, to Imow him better, she begsm to be less afiaid of losing him, but she also began to leant something of his temper and moods. Sometimes he could be chilthshly affectionate, wHch endeared him to her. At other ttoes Ms mind seemed to be shut away ftom her; then she would sit quietly for hours as he lay in bed or stretched on the soft reading.^ "Shut off that radio, will you?” he would say, and she would silence it. He read profusely, and Ms desk was always

stacked with new books and magazines. Now and then he would ask for a cup of tea, and she would get up and bring it to him, and he would not even notice it.

‘^Shall I go?”

'“No, I want you.”

“But you are occupied.”

'*¥68. I want you just to sit there and be in the room.”

“What is the use of my being in the room if you won’t even look at me?”

He did not even reply but went on reading, and she stayed.

Then sometimes there would be moments of amorous madness, when his mind was free. He would bite off a few fibres of dried gizzard and ask her to bite them from his mouth, and he would push back her black curls and hold up her face like a full moon in his two hands and caress her. She lived for those moments and endured his moods of silence as the price a woman had to pay for the love of a man.

She suffered from a little sense of futility and resentment that she was not able to care for him personally as a wife should; his clothes were well pressed, his shoes always blacked, his socks had no holes, his buttons were firm, his ties in perfect taste, and there was no point even in buying linen handkerchiefs for one who had so many, always clean. But sometimes when he was dressing he would let her garter his socks for him, lace his shoes, and tie his tie and buckle his belt, while he caressed her like a child.

Once, finding that his fece needed a cleaner shave, she told him to lie quietly in bed, and she put cream on his &ce, lovingly

tubbing it with her velvety fingers and then she leisurely and luxuriously shaved him iintil his &.ce was perfectly smooth, her hand moving over it again and again. Then she sat on the edge of the bed and took his hand and made him feel his cheeks and asked, “How is that?”

“You are a perfect barber,” he said.

He pulled her to him and put his face against hers. “After the shaving, the massage,'” he said, and she began mbbing her soft cheeks against his in a gentle rotating motion, until she fell asleep on his breast.

Moreover, Poya, as a strategist, had a perfect sense of line and form. He had a theory about the woman’s body which amused her. Once they began to talk of the mijenchien, or “beauty's

shoulders,” sloping gacefully 4o^wards ftom the neck, as seen in all classical paintings o£ 'wromen, instead»or being square and erect. Poya said that >Tanni’s only defect wis that she stood too erect, lacking 'the “b^uty?s shoulders.” Tanni protested that there was no beauty in sloping shoulders. '

'•You do not understand,” said Poya. don’t nacan that you

shotildj^toop, but y^ should bend your shoulders just slightly forward. That is -^^t I mean by rouijd, sloping shouldeirs, conforming with the cuiwe of the back. The whole body of woman goes in oirves, gently and ipipeiCbpidbly merging into one another. On the back, the first'curve begins from the neck antf the second from the small of the waist. These curves disappear and join and harmcmize with the curve of the belly in ‘ikont. In a short woman’ the pivot or exact centre of afi curves on her body is in the navel, wMe-In a-taller woman, the centre shifts slightly below, in the region of the ‘field .of immortality,’ gs the Taoists call it.” .

“The Western women all have square shoulder^,” protested •Tanni. * ' • • .

“That is different. They are too tall and some of them are too niuscular to be of any use.* And the centre of curves is considerably lower, so that they need Ae erect shoulders to lift it up, as it were.” * \

Tanni smiled. "You are a connoisseur.” *

‘Tt*is the truth. 'I really think I would make a- first-class designer. . . Now, (^n’t smile. Dress designing is an art, the highest of all the plastic arts, being based on a sense of lin<^ and form and related to sculpture — ^but with this difference, that the sculptor deals with day, whereas the dress designer deals with living human flesh and God-given form. The real dress designer

cannot be paid for his services. He cannot make dresses for
women whose bodies are not interesting, as a real artist cannot
faint uninteresting fac^ Sometimes when I go about the streets
I see a girl and say, “There, I should like to design her dress.’
It is very tardy that one sees the ideal figiyre. You are very near
iti except for diose shoulders.”

"But that is the modem way,” remarked Tanni, much
"It is wrong. Let me e^lain. The beauty of woman, like
beauty in calligraphy, is not in' static proportions, but in dynamic,
rhythm.' A too fleshy body may have, sensuous appeal, but it loses

the suggestion of movement, while a too firm body spoils it
ehtitely. I know a vroman has a perfect body when I see her walk
with.just a suggestion of litheness, moving in soft, living curves.
The way Kaimn walks and stands is perfedily horrible. Now you
have never seen the best Western sculpture. The shoulders are
rojond, never square. The shoulders’ curve slopes gently ftom
the neck and blends perfectly with the curve of the back. . . .
Now bend forward, evM so slightly. . . . Remember the
invisible curve .begins ftom your qavel in front and ends in the
back of your neck above. . . . There, that is perfect. . . . Don’t
hold it rigidly. . . *■ Move all yoft like, sideways, forward 'and
backward. Only remember where the centre is.”

“You are not by any chance practising on me as a model?”

said Tanni, relaxing.

. “No. You have a perfect Uthe rhythm. That is why I hate to see you spoil it by too square shoulders. But, oh, Lien-erh, you are really perfect.’’

To Poya, she was iqdeed perfect as a lover* He was content Vdth her ministration of love, but she was not quite content. Allien she was living with other ‘men, half of what Poya was giving her had been enough. This love play was not all that she wanted now; this pattern of iqve did uot fit .with her ideal. The hotel boys had come to know her, and when she left Poya’s room, they would say good night to her as she passed, addressing her as kmiang, as professional girls visiting 'men at hotels were called, and she.did not like the flavour of it.

For Poya was satisfied with his physical love, and with the arrangement as it was. He never spoke of divorce, and she did not paention it. Being a woman she was thinking of more than the satisfecdon of the senses; she ■vras thinking of a permanent home and an ideal of life and perhaps even children. He talked about the war, but only as an outpouring of his mind, rather than as speaking to her; he would have spoken so to anyone, and the war as he saw it had nothing to do with their love.

She tried several times to speak of their plans and their future.

She tried, in her own ineffective way, to picture to him that higher happiness in work in the war areas, that Lao Peng had shown to her. But Poya was not interested. He did not even approve of her having brought Yumei with her, because Yumei had proved only an obstacle to their love-making, and prevented him from

meeting her in her own rooms. Yumei, being firesh from the country and unspoiled, assumed her equality with all persons, and, having not yet learned the manners of city servants towards their masters, was esasperatingly talkative and inquisitive.

Tanni told with enthusiasm how Lao Peng had tried to feed the refugees on the streets and had had to flee for his life.

"That’s just like him,” said Poya carelessly. “Now you don’t expect me to hand out mantou to refugees, do you? Mind you, I like Lao Peng. But I wish you wouldn’t spe^ so often about him.”.

Tanni felt in him a slight sense of reproach against himself at the mention of his friend and said no more.

But her dissatisfaction was a deep one. She was living again

the life of the kept woman — of the “private chauffeur” as she called it, rather than of the "owner-driver.” Her efforts to meet Poya’s women relatives again had failed.

"I have been introduced to them. Why can’t I go and see them again, as Lao Peng’s niece or just as a friend?”

At last Poya consented to take her, and she bought some presents for Ac children. Afei and Qiinya were not at home. There was an evident change in the attitude of Paofen and Dimfragrance. Even Wanlo looked at her differently, when she first went in; there was a hesitation and conflict in her fece.

“I met Miss Peng,” said Poya, "and asked her to come along. She said she wanted to see you again and the children.”

“We don’t know how to address her now,” said Paofen, politely, but somewhat coldly. "As Miss Peng, or as Miss Tsui?”

"Just call me Tanni. I’ve brought a few little things for the children. Come, Wanlo, this is for you.”

Wanlo came forward and Tanni took her hand and said, ^*Just call me Tanni ebiebebieb”

Wanlo was confused and embarrassed to be holding hands with a “runaway concubine” — a mysterious being, she knew, because of the way the grown-ups had spoken the words. But she said,

"Thank you, Tanni cbiebebiebt' and smiled.

Then Ta nn i gave a parcel to each of the other children. The mothers' insistence that she ought not to spend money on them suggested that the gifts were forced on them, rather than welcome.

"Since Ta nni duebebieb has brought them already, take them and

i8o

thank hei," sai^Faofen to her girls. Tanni envied her and wished that she herself could be as superior and matronly.

"The children have been talking a great deal about you," said Dimd&agtance, mote warmly. "You mustn't spoil them."

Tanni had intended to talk with the women, but the children surrounded her and urged her to tell them more about her journey and the guerrillas. Dimfragrance sat silently listening, while Paofen talked only with Poya. Tanni felt the same "look of wives" that she had known so well; the same casual yet attentive look out of the corners of their eyes, while she was telling her story to the children. No one had made an effiirt to be particularly cordial to her. When Poya suggested leaving, she left with him, feeling she had cheapened herself by this visit, and that some part

of her dream of the big ftmUy about which she had heard so much was crumbling. The worst of it was that Poya seemed totally unconscious of this.

He suggested supper outside and a dance. Until now tiey had avoided going out together for feat of being seen by his wife's relatives. Once he had asked her to go to a night club witih him and she had declined. But to-night she readily agreed.

They went to a dance haU on the second floor of a building overlooking the Race Ojurse. In spite of the war, the place was more crowded than ever. The whole city of Shanghai was enjoying a boom from the wealthy refugees. Goods were becoming expensive, but the shops never suffered from lack of customers.

They took a table at the side of fhe great dimly-lighted ball-room. A Filipmo jazz band was playing. Different-coloured Neon lights were concealed in the mouldr^s, and in the centre a huge glass ball with many ftcets, kept turning, throwing points of colour on the men and women milling on the dance floor. Fifty or sixty dancing hostesses and two or three white Russian women were seated in the inner row, or dancing with their partners. The Russian women attracted much attention by their more abandoned dress and movements. The music stopped at very short intervals to enable the dance hall to sell as many tickets as possible. It was a crowd as different ftom the starving refugees on Avenue Edouard VII, as one world ftom another. 'Inere were

two Shanghais. One was the dty of the poor and destitute, who led a wandering existence gleaning food ftom garbage cans (a

correspondent of the North China Daily News had angrily pro-tested because stray dogs -were allowed to prowl the streets and ransack garbage cans, but her letter had not mentioned the human refugees). The other Shanghai was well fed and well groomed, smug and not even sophisticated, enjoying the felsc security of a foreign settlement, speculating on the duration of the war and the prospective strength of the Chinese currency. Moreover, the Shanghai war was over. Seven hundred bombs had been dropped that diy on Soochow. The enemy was moving farther and ferthet away.

Tanni was dejected and after a while suggested that they leave.

“Why, what is the matter with you to-night?” asked Poya. "Come, let’s dance. I have never yet danced with you.”

Tanni obeyed and rose and took Poya’s arm. Ihe orchestra was playing a blues song and the light changed to a soft purple. They floated along in me subdued light, her face close to his breast. She followed his steps superbly, with just that much soft resistance which constitutes a perfect dancer.

When they came back to their seats they were both happy again.

The white light was turned on and the audience looked about the room ^d at each other. The room was warm, and some of the dancing girls were fimning themselves with their handkerdu^.

A fet man in foreign dress craved his hand at Poya.

“Who is he?” Tanni asked.

“A doctor I knew in Peiping. He is opening a drug firm to import Java qui n i ne and seU it to the Chinese Army. A smart raoney-makmg idea, isn’t it?” There was a tone of contempt in Poya’s voice.

“We are learning something, aren’t we?” she replied. “I see in the papers that the Government has sent out a call for volunteer doctors. There is a great need of doctors for the army. Why don’t they go?”

''The go^ ones have gone already,” said Poya. “ This is a voluntary matter for each to decide for himself.”

A tango began and only two couples danced it. One was a fet Russian woman dancing with a slim Chinese youth hardly twenty, in evening dress with a white fece and slick hair, proudly and

skilfully executing the steps before the watching audience.

Tanni and Poya joiaed the next dance. While they were

dancing, he saw her smiling to somebody, and saw a girl seated on the inside row watching them and s miling back. The girl was in white, her fece was full, and her lips heavily rouged. She looked a litde older than Tanni.

"Who is that?” asked Poya.

"An old friend of mine. I knew her when I was a dancing girl at Tientsin.”

After the dance, Tanni went to the girl and invited her to their table, and introduced her to Poya as Miss Yen, and said her name was Siangyun, She was one of the dancing hostesses in this place.

While the two women were talking and laughing as old friends, Poya watched Siangyun. She looked about twenty-eight and might be thirty-two and had the air of a mature woman. Despite her dress he judged by the way she held her cigarette and by her generally quieter movements that she had come from an old social background. Her hair was done in the impeccable old feshion,

combed straight back to a glossy finish and gathered in a low-hangiug, neatly braided, carafully padded coil behind her neck — a task of hairdressing that usually took one or two hours. Two tmy jasmine flowers were thrust in above the coifiure. Her voice had the soft coarseness of a woman who has not slept enough. The flesh below her temples covered well her rather high cheekbones.

Poya, interested in her, said, "This place is stifling hot. Shall we ask her to our rooms, so that you can have a good talk together?”

Poya bought ten dollars* worth of tickets for Siangyun, so that she could leave the hall, and they went to his hotel. When Siangytm called her friend “Malin” she was told that her name had been changed and that she was called "Tanni** now. She whispered to Tanni about the story which had appeared in a Shanghai labloid paper, and Tanni told her that she had run away, but that the story was distorted. "Mr. Yao knows all about it,*’ she said.

‘‘Mr. Yao,” said Siangyun, "she was always a lucky girl. She was easily the most popular dancer. Of course she was young then, but even after these years she is as pretty as ever. A person like me remains in the old rut. What can I look forward to? I shall soon be a ‘half-old Madame Hsu’?’*

“Don’t disparage yourself,” said Tanni

“She deserves tie luck. When I saw you at the ball, I thought you wouldn’t recognize me,” she said, half to Poya and half to Tanni.

Poya looked at her feet. She was wearing modem leather shoes of a special kind, but the hump on the arch and the peculiar smallness of the shoes showed at a glance that her feet had been bound in childhood.

“Things have changed,” Siang3mn went on, with her comfortable worldly-wise philosophy. “Do you think that if I could be a concubine, I would refuse? But everything has changed. When I was a child, women were not like this. The sing-song tradition has changed — ^it is even dying out now. A number of the sing-song artists are working in the dance hall now instead. Ten years ago, sing-song women would have died of shame to come out in the open like that, dancing with strangers. But what can we do? The gitl students are competing with us. And modem women ate coming out in public, so why shouldn’c the sing-song artists, too? Formerly the family women were one class, and the mistresses and courtesans another. Now wives are dressing and playing about to compete with the mistresses.”

“Don’t you think they should?” asked Poya with a smile.

^Tfes, but the worst of it is that they don’t even let their husbands have inistresscs now. And with all the girl students to attract the young men, it becomes more and more dfficult. The wives compete with the mistresses, and the mistresses compete with the girl students. It is getting to be a cut-throat competition. Formerly when a siaoebieh had relations with a man, he had to marry her. Now he does not have to.”

“You think a mah should marry a gitl when he has relations with her?” asked Poya. Tanni looked quickly at him.

Siangyun said, “Whatever it is, you men wm. The world is in chaos. Why? Isn’t it just that a man wants a woman and a woman wants a man? If a girl grows up and does not marry, Acre is trouble, and if a boy grows up and does not marry, there is also trouble. Only when man has woman and woman has man, is there peace in the world. . . . But it is getting so complicated. Even good family gkls cannot get married— not to speak of usl Did you ever see old maids before? Now they are everywhere. What woman does not want to have a man and be done with

it all?”

Siangyun laughed in her hoarse voice, and Poya smiled with

her. After a pause, she said, “Honestly, I am a little tired. I know I am not pretty. If I were a wife, I could tolerate a mistress, and if I were a mistress, I could tolerate a wife. There is nothing that cannot be adjusted.”

Poya sat looking at Siangyun. The woman’s simple animal philosophy pleased him, especially when she had said that modem wives are dressing and playing about to compete with mistresses. He noticed that she raised her hand to pat her hair as only a woman of the old type did. Now she flicked her finger-nails against each other skilfully, making a snapping noise with each flick.

“I used to see my Aunt Coral flick her nails like that,” said Poya.

Siangyun laughed. “Seven or eight years ago, I trimmed the finger-nails short, to be modern like the girl students. Then I saw in the movies that Western women also grow long nails. You just think, is there an5nliing Howliwu [Hollywood] does that modem Chinese girls don’t do? As I see it. East Ocean, West Ocean — they are all alike. You go to a movie and see that Western women have as hard a time keeping their men as the Chinese women. It is always the same thing. You watch and watch and in the end, the man has the woman and the woman has the man, and then your heart feels better and you know there is peace in the world again.”

They sat talking undl about eleven o’clock, when Siangyun said that she must go.

“I am not going to interfere with you and I shall leave you alone,” she said. “But, Malin, you might introduce me to a friend like your nice Yao sbaoyeb. Where are you living?”

Tanni gave her address.

When Sangyun had left, Po^ said, “That woman is interesting. But I thought you wanted to keep your address secret.”

“Oh, it is safe with her.”

“I was thinking only of your safety. For myself, I would like to know her better. Do you mind?”

“Not at aU. She has told you something men can never understand. Poya, I trust you.”

“Did you trust the men you were living with?”

“That was diSFerent. . - . Poya, I want to talk to you. I don’t

care what you do about your wife. But we want to live together always, don’t we?”

“Of course we do,” he said, warmly.

“Shall we pledge it in writing then? I am asking nothing else ftom you.”

To Poya’s surprise, she brought out two squares of red sillr

“We will write a pledge of eternal love. I will keep one, and you keep one,” she said. ^Tt will be my treasure for life.”

She sat down to write, while Poya ground the ink for her. It was a formal pledge in contract form, giving first the names and dates of birth of &e parties, and saying that Yao Poya and Tsui Lien-erh promised to love one another and be good to one another like the male and female pheenises, and that their love would not change till the rocks should decay and the seas should dry up, in witness whereof they attached their signatures.

‘"11118 will not be quite legal unless we have it witnessed,” said Poya after signing his name. She suggested Yumei, and he said that it must be witnessed by a lawyer, and that in a day or two he would bring a lawyer to the room to sign in their presence. So Tanni took her roll of silk and kissed him good night and went back to her own hotel.

CHAPTER XII

PoTA WENT back to his wife's home that night. His wife had not yet gone to bed.

"You smell of drink," she said.

"I do."

"You have been out with women again."

"I have."

"I should have thought you would keep up appearances, at least while you are in my parents' home."

Poya went on undressing.

"At what hotel are you staying?"

"That you need not know."

"There was a man here this afternoon, who wanted to see you and asked where you were, and I could not even tell him. My

mother thought at least I should know. Hasn’t dus gone fer enough?”

''What did he want?”

“I don’t know. He said he would come again.” ,

Poya saw that her eyes were ted. The conversation was &r from ended as fax as she was concerned, and she was muttering to herself. "I know,” she said. *‘A young man in Shanghai is like a cat near a kettle of fish. If there are not prostitutes, there are renegade concubines.”

Poya looked up. "So you are still on that subject. What renegade concubine? Some concubines have the sense to run away when they don’t like a mao.”

His words bit. Thinkin g of what Siangyun had said about the competition of wives, he chuckled, and Kainan broke down completely, while he went on with his own thoughts.

The truA was that Kainan had wept that afternoon when her mother questioned her about Poya. Her mother was a strong woman and had told her husband about it. But Mr. Hsia was an old siufsai scholar who had found it hard to adjust himself to modem surroundings and appreciated the comfort made possible

by a rich son-in-law. He still used in his speech classical con-
junctions and adverbs in place of the modem idioms. And
besides, in his heart he did not disapprove.

"It is no use stirring up trouble," he said to his old wife.

Albeit tUs is what Kain^ says, a son-in-law is mmtbehss a
son-in-law. You try to stop him. A young man is ahvi^s a young
man. You stop him from one woman, and not improbably he would
go to another woman, and you stop him from that woman, not
improbably he would go to another. What is the harm? Is he not
taking cate well of us old people?" So the matter stopped there.

Poya got up late the next morning. After lunch he thought of
his promise to get a lawyer, and he went out, telling Kainan that
he might be gone for the whole day.

As he stepped out into the alleyway, he was met by a square-
shouldered naan in a long gown. Beyond he saw a new car and
a burly chauffeur.

''You are Mr. Yao?"

Poya nodded.

"Mr. Tung wants to see you."

"Who is Mr. Tung?"

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"Nfevcr mind. Come into the car.”

Poya looked at the big chauffeur and thought of kidnappers. He tried to dodge, but the man grasped his atm and said, "Don’t be alarmed. Our master invites you to have a talk.”

Poya had a feeling that he was caught, and that he probably would not come back firee without signing a large cheque. Try ing to keep calm, he got into the car. The man was quite polite to him, and the chauffeur, in ordinary dress, had a not unpleasant fece. He looked like a Shanghai native of the labouring class.

"What is it?” he asked.

The man spoke in Shanghai dialect. ‘Tfou will find out when Mr. Tung sees you. He has sent this car for you, and it must be important business. We take orders and never ask questions.”

The car sped into the French Concession and stopped at a

respectable ^den home. Recogniaiog the car, the guards swung open a big iron gate.

Poya was now less firightened than he had been. He had heard of Mr. Tung, one of the best-known leaders of the Chinese underworld. Only three days ago he had heard from Afei that Mr. Tung was one of the most energetic workers for the niinftR<> cause, covering underground activities. Perhaps having heard that he had come to Shanghai, Mr. Tung wanted money firom him for his work.

He was ushered in by a tall, erect young man dressed in Chungshan uniforml Mr. Tung’s office was on the main floor, occupying two connected rooms with ihe usual mixture of Chinese and Western furniture. A set of eight scrolls of calli-graphy hung on the wall. A nice-looking young woman was in Sie inner room with several secretaries. Mr. Timg himself stood up to greet him, with a direct, forceful smile ;

"I am sorry to trouble you like this, Mr. Yao. But there is important business awaitir^ your advice.”

"I am honoured to have this chance of meeting you,” responded Poya.

The host showed Poya to a chair. His manner had the com-bination of old Chine se politeness and the forthright simplicity of a m^ of action. He walked with brisk steps to the inner room

and said something to one of his secretaries. Then he name back to his desk, smiling again.

The &mous Mr. Tung was a man in his forties, with

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dose-shaven head, atoimd which his hand roamed while he talked. He had an eminently likeable fece, with medium-high cheek-bones and a good proportion between bone and musde. He was wearing a blue quilted gown, and his white shirt-sleeves were rolled up outside the gown sleeves in the usual fashion. Poya was fesdnated by his simplidty. The French Munidpal Government, of which he was a councillor, could not maintain law and order without him. It was true that the gangs he ruled used to be connected with kidnappings. But it was impossible to understand this seaet organiaation without knowing a little of its background. With a thousand years' history behind them, such outlaw organizations of the brave had grown up in times of political chaos, murdering tax collectors and rapadous magistrates and robbing the rich to give to the poor, and they had a code of chivalry associated with "men of the rivers and lakes." Consequently Mr. Tung was also one of the most influential, powerful,

and respected men in Shanghai. His name usually led campaigns for famine relief, induding that of the Buddhist Red Cross, which has its cross in the form of the Buddhist swastika, turned in the opposite direction ftom the Nazi swastika.

Mr. Tung was a dose friend of Chiang Kaishek and many government leaders. As the war grew, he became one of the most important patriotic liaison workers between the Government and the outside world, because his word of honour was implidtly trusted. He had risen to his position through his spirit of feir play and his total disregard for money. On New Y^ear's Eve he kept open house, with piles of banknotes stacked on his table from which those in n^ could hdp themsdves, while the lower members of the gang received their distribution at the public bath-houses. When die war broke out, he had thrown himself into the anti-traitor work upon which the Government very much depended, and he was responsible for many of the assassinations of traitors. In the end he spent the last cent of his own money in Shanghai and in Hong Kong, for this political work. But when he needed more money, any of his banker firiends would be glad to help with a couple of hundred thousand dollars.

The secretary had brought a folder of dpeuments. Mr. Tung took it and told him to dose the sliding^door.

"There is a matter under investigation," he said, in tolerable

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Mandarin. He showed Poya a clipping firom a tabloid paper, giving the story of Tsui Malin. you seen that?”

'T have heard the story.”

^^Well, Mr. Yao,” he begaUj felling into tiie Shanghai dialect. ^Y^ou have probably heard of my work — ^to exterminate the traitors in the treaty ports. I know that your grandfether was a generous helper of the Revolution, and of course we are all Chinese. Two weeks ago, we raided the house of a traitor here and found these documents. Some of the letters and telegrams sent from Tientsin bear the name of Tsui Malin.”

This slow and polite approach gave Poya time to think of his answer, and he was making up his mind. But Mr. Tung went on. ^^e have received reports from Tientsin also. The girPs apart-ment was raided and many documents were seized, also showing her correspondence with traitors in the South. The woman evidently escaped. We also had reports from the Tientsin police, that this woman was staying in your house in Peiping for some time. She is probably here now. Where is she?”

Following his first instinct to protect her, Poya answered, 'T don*t know.^’

^TIow did you come to know her?”

Poya was given no chance to deny that he had ever known her, so he said, ^^Onc of my women relatives was one of her friends. It must have been years ago that they met. But she left us, and I don^t know where she is.”

^TPlease look at some of these documents. We must find this woman. She was a dancing girl. We have investigated, but no one here knows her.”

Poya was confused now. He did not know the details of Tannins story, except that she had hotly denied that she had run away with money, and that she said she had run away because the man she was living with was working with the Japanese. When she had wanted to tdl him, he had said he did not want to hear it. He took the documents and glanced over them. Some of the telegrams and letters were signed with Mahnos name. They chiefly concerned the movements of individuals with unusual cryptic names. Only the Japanese names could be at once recognized. The reports mentioned efforts in negotiation with the Japanese to set up a puppet government in North China. The story in these documents was completely new to him. His fece blanched and Tung saw it.

‘Tfou see that this woman is important for us.”

“Her name may have been used as a cover,” suggested Poya. Remembering what Tanni had said, he continued, “One cannot believe the tabloid papers. If she was wanted by the puppet police, she could not mve been working with them.”

“That depends on how you look at it,” said Mr. Tung. “There is a certain mystery about her, I admit. The puppets may want her because she is in hiding and knows all their secrets, but so do we. Anyway, the evidence is there. You are working with us and not with her, I hope? Will you produce her or not?”

Mr. Tung’s eyes gleamed and his eyebrows stood up a little. Poya was inwardly frightened, knowiog Tung’s reputation, but he answered with an affected and not too natural laugh, “Mr. Tung, you don’t mean I am a traitor, too? I would teU you if I knew. But she left our house suddenly and disappeared.”

Tung turned and called in one of his secretaries.

“Mr. Yao,” he said, “you will kindly help us with a description of her.”

“Yes, of course,” said Poya. He had half a mind to tell the truth. Tanni had not spoken to him about the telegrams and letters, and it shocked hum to see her name in a traitor’s corre-

spondence. He had only one instinct, to protect her from further trouble. In a second's time, he made up his mind that Tanni must leave the city immediately. He had gone too far to retract. So when he was questioned, he answered with pretended calm. Tung saw the hesitation on his face and the affectation in his accent. The secretary was preparing to take notes.

**What is her height?" T^g asked.

"She is quite tall for a girl. I never measured her."

"What does she look like?"

'Wery pretty, very pretty," he answered. He thought of Kainan, and from there on, he spoke fluently. "The northern type of beauty, big eyes, heavy eyebrovre, painted finger-nails. Her voice, I remember, -was a litde choppy."

"Any birthmarl^"

"None that I saw."

"Her hair?"

''Brushed straight and cut short at the back, like the modem ladies. And I remember that she had a gold-^ed tooth."

Poya's inventiveness did not quite overcome Tung's incredulity,

but he said, “Mr. Yao, I am much obliged to you. I hope the descriptions are accurate. You understand that she could be of great help to us. We must unearth the movements of this group. Now, I shall not detain you longer. If you think of some other points of interest, I hope you will come and inform my secretary.”

Poya thanked him and said good-bye. Tung made a sign to his secretary, and to his surprise, he was led into another room, where two old gentlemen were sitting.

“I have said good-bye to Mir. Tung, and I am going home,” Poya protested to the secretary.

''Mr. Tung wants you to have a rest. Be seated. It is comfortable here. If you have anything more to teU us, come over and see me.”

Poya sat and thought. He had answered the questions quite successfully, he thought, but he knew that he had not succeeded in concealing the agitation on his face. The implications were astonishing to him. He could not understand how Tanni had gone so fer, but he could not believe that she was working with the traitors. He was not sure that Tanni could clear herself, if

brought to Mr. Tung. He thought of her whole ^st. She was always escaping from something. Was she using hkn as a means of escape? He remembered that she had told Yumei that he was very riA, and she had asked him herself how rich he was. Perhaps his first suspicion was right. Ihen he thought of her loveliness with a tormented remembrance.

At last he went in and told the secretary he wanted to leave, but the secretary told him that it was Mr. Tung's wish that he should have more time.

He remained for fiiUy two hours. It was a general reception room. Servants passed out and in, and there were visitors of different classes coming in. Whenever a servant brought a new visitor a cup of tea, he would also change Poya's cup and bring him a hot towel. Telephones rang constantly in the other room.

At about four, the guard in Chungshan uniform came in and said that Mr. Tung wanted to send him home in his car. It seemed that the eyes of every servant were fixed upon bim as he left the house.

Arriving at his home, he told his wife he was not going out She saw the troubled look on his fece, but he would not explain what had happened. At supper-time, he went out to telephone to

Tanni, then changed his mind, and telephoned to his hotel, where he had registered as Mr. Chuan. He left word that he would not be coming in for a few days and that if the lady called, they were to teU her not to expect him.

On his way to make the telephone call, he had seen a candy peddler sitting on the sidewalk outside the entrance to his alley. The man looked sharply at him as he passed. As this was not a busy street, he thought it unusual at this time of the day.

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Tanni had been waiting the whole day for him to come or to telephone, as he usually did. After supper, she could ti^t no longer and went to his hotel.

“Mr. Chuan just called,” said the boy, “and he said he would not be coming for a few days. He said you are not to expect him.”

Tanni was shocked. Why had he not telephoned to her at least?

Poya stayed at home and wrestled with the problem of what he

was to do about Tanni. He retired to his wife's room on the third floor, and when his wife came in he pretended to be reading, but she could see that he was in one of his reticent moods.

Tanni's voice, her smile, constantly disturbed him. He could not reconcile them with the things she had done.

The next morning he decided to consult his uncle Afei, and he went to the Burlington at eleven. Paofen had gone out, and Afei sent the children away to Dimftagrance's room, while Poya discussed his problem with him. Afei and Poya were the only direct male descendants of the Yao femily, and the two men could talk intimately. Afei had reached his forties, but he still looked young except for the premature grey hair at his temples.

"Why don't you teU the truth?" said Afei. "If the ^irl is innocent, she can clear herself. And if she is guilty, she will get only what she deserves."

"You don't understand." '

Afti looked at Poya's troubled ftce.

"I am in love with her," Poya confessed.

Afei smiled. "What -will you do, then?"

"I don't know. I only know that I must get her out of here. Mr.

Tung was very polite, but I knor^ I am being shadowed."

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"Trust Mr. Tung for that," said Afei. 'Tf he cannot get information about her directly from you, he will get it some-how."

"There was a peddler outside our alley late last night, and this morning he was stiU there. And a strange car was parked not frt from our entrance."

'Tfou have told them enough lies to get yourself in trouble if she is caught."

"So long as she gets out of the city — she has been wanting to go inland — she will not be in trouble."

"Have you told her about it?"

"Not yet. I could not decide. And I cannot help her to get away, if I am watched myself. It will only lead her into trouble if she is seen with me."

"What do you think of her yourself? Do you believe she was worldng with the traitors?"

Poya paused, perplexed. “That is what I was trying to solve for myself last night. She may have been used as a cover by the man she was living with. But I love her. Don’t smilp at me. I am serious.”

'Don’t you t h i nk you arc a little hasty?” said Afei in his cool, deliberate manner. “You may believe you are in love with her. She seemed to me very pretty and charming. I know you are dissatisfied with Kainan. As your uncle I should counsel you to think carefully. If it were an ordinary woman, I would not min/j so much But here is a girl— and I can understand your for her — ^with a doubtful record — ^wanted by the police and by the traitors and by the anti-traitors. As you told us, she nearly got our femily into trouble in Peiping. Why don’t you wait a little — ^know her better — ^before you decide anything? I wonder what our women relatives would say if they knew. Then thore is K a inan . There would be divorce and all t^t. Don’t you think you are involving yourself in a great deal?”

"But I must do something immediately, at least.”

“Why don’t you telephone to her and let her explain herself? You do not want to be mixed up with traitors and an adventuress. She just ran away from another man. If you don’t trust her enough to believe that she could dear herself with Tung’s group, how can you be stire of her innocence yourself?”

Poya paced the floor agitatedly.

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“I think she can get away herself. The sooner the better. I will speak to her.”

He took the telephone receiver and called her number. Afei cautioned him not to say too much over the telephone.

“HeUo, Lien-erh!”

"Oh, Poya! You frightened mel What has happened? Did you get the lawyer?”

“Lien-erh, listen to me. I forgot all about that. Lien-erh . . . will you listen to me? Something has happened. You must get out of the city as soon as possible. ... I cannot see you. . . . I am being watched. . . . I cannot explain over the phone. . . . No, I cannot come. . . .”

He heard her halting, choking voice. "Lien-erh, don’t cry. . . . Listen to me. . . . You must arrange quickly to leave Shanghai.

. . . Make your own plans,” he went on, but he could not be sure whether she had heard or not. The line was dead.

"It is impossible to say anything to a woman over the tele-
phone," he said as he hung up the receiver. "I had better run
over. rU risk it."

'TDon't. You may be arrested together. Write her if you like.
It is safer."

Poya leaned back in his chair pounding the arms in veration.
'Tfou don't understand. Uncle. I am going to marry her. We
have pledged that to each other. Now I cannot even help her
to get away."

^*1 hate to come between you and your romance, but this is
the only thing possible. You will only betray her if you go to
see her. And ^ides, what is the huixy? Have you made up
your mind to marry her?"

"I don't know — ^I don't know anything — ^I just can't think,"
said Poya, coveting his fece.

So Poya wrote a letter to her and sent it out to be posted.

"Uncle," Poya said, when the letter was gone, "may I ask you
a question — a personal one?"

'WThat?"

Poya spoke with his fece cast discreedy to\rards the floor.

"How did you feel when Aunt Redjade died?”

In Afei’s eyes between his greying temples there was a look of a deep, long wound, that had lain in his sold for years. “Well, it \ras very difficult,” he said slowly. "Especially under the

ijy aft

circumstances. I couldn’t realize it. If you want to know, she had died for me. That was what her maid said.”

He stopped, his voice choking a little.

'T bring this up,” Said the nephew, “only because Tanni took a special interest in Aunt Redjade. I showed her her picture in the ninngmintang because she had especially asked to see it.”

Afei’s eyes brightened. “Is the picture still there?”

“Yes.”

For a few moments each man sat lost in his own thoughts. Poya’s mention of Redjade brought his romance closer to the uncle. At last Afei managed to say, “Tanni reminded me a little of Redjade. r.a1m yourself, and wait and see.”

They did not mention Redjade any more, and Paofen returned to the two men sitting silently together, looking as if they had seen a ghost.

* *

*

Going back from the hotel where she had been told that Poya would not be coming, Tanni had felt something strongly amiss. All that evening she brooded and hoped for the telephone to' ring. As the evening wore on, her waiting became one of passionate longing, and perplexity and doubt entered her mind. She tried to console herself with the thought that perhaps he was busy finding a lawyer.

She was used to waiting aU night for the man she lived with, and she knew w^ that situation of lying in bed and imag ining that the man was in the arms of some other woman. She could hardly sleep; she would doze off for an hour, and wake up and listen for footsteps, and toss in bed, tortured by desire.

When the telephone rang in the morning, towards noon, she was reclining on a sofr and jumped up excitedly. What Poya said was confusiog and incomprdbensible. As she hung up the telephone!, the only thing remaining in her mind was that he was not coming to see her. Her woman’s instinct told her that he*

was avoiding her. She was not interested in his reasons; indeed, he had given none. Then slowly some words came back to her. He had told her to leave Shanghai as soon as possible, and had said something about making her own plans. Why couldn’t he come and give her an explanation? Was he trying to get away from her b^use she had asked him to write that pledge two

nights ago? Because this love meant so much to her, because she had unreservedly and perhaps foolishly expected so much, tbe torture of doubt she stereo ■was all the greater.

Yumei saw her collapse on the sofa and break do'wn crying.

"What is the razVcsXysiaochhhi Has something happened to shaojei^ Is he sick?”

Tanni managed to say between her tears, "I am going a'way. We are to leave soon. We ■will go without him.” She stopped to cry again and hid her fece in die so&.

She lay there for a long time. Always the words came back, "I cannot see you.” Everything else xiras forgotten. Because she had become used to a visit from him every day, this sudden change was hard to bear, and made worse by her fears and doubts. Had

she behaved cheaply to him and "was he now throwing her off as men had thro'wn her off before? Was this just another playboy episode to him and she only another cheap kept woman for him? She could not telephone to ask him for an explanation, for she did not know where to reach him, since he would not be coming to his hotel.

Bitter resentment rose out of her soul — ^resentment against men in general, -with the whole background of her past experience.

“Posbinglang! Fickle loverl” Yumei heard her say. "A girl gives her heart and body to a man, and after he is satisfied, he throws her away like a fen in autumn.”

"What did he say?”

‘“He is not coming to see me.”

"How can he treat siaocMeb like that?” said Yumei, burning with anger. "When he comes, let me reckon with him.”

^*He is. not coming. Yumei, I have fidled. There is no chance for me. Probably ms women relatives have talked against me. But it is men’s hearts that are evil. Women are only their play-things and no more.”

‘‘Siliocbieb, when I heard that he was married and you went out ■with him, I was worried. He is a bad man, taking advantage

of you.”

"Do you think he is a bad man?” asked Tanni, half-defending him.

"Wasn’t that taking advantage of you, when he is married?”

"Yes, I ■was blind. All men are unreliable,” Tanni said wearily.

"Not all,” replied Yumei. ^TJnde Peng is a good man.”

The mention of Uncle Peng softened a little her bitterness against men. *‘Yes,” she said slowly, "we are going to meet Unde Peng in Hankow. We should have had a letter firom bitn by now.”

She got up to dress, but as she sat before the dresser, everything reminded her of Poya — ^the little perfume bottles and the jade brooches he had bought for her — ^they were like toys to him — t he trimming he had admired, and her own face in the glass. She could shut her eyes and fed him smelling her face all over in his peculiar way, and she could fed his hands holding up her &ce in adoration like a full moon. Was it all over? Had she jumped too rashly to conclusions? Lao Peng’s words: ^‘You must never doubt each other,” came back to her as though he were still in the room and his words, firesh-spoken, still ringing in the air. So she spent that night with an ache in her heart that was half passion,

half remorse.

In the morning she asked Yumei to go to Qhangfetsan eady, and see if there was any mail from Unde Peng. Yumd came back with a bright smile, holding two letters in her hand.

Tanni snatched Aem. At a glance she saw that they came from Poya and Lao Peng. Her free burned as she tore open Poya’s letter first. It read:

Younger Sister Lien-erh,

Something has happened. I could not explain it over the tde-phone. Events make it also unwise for me to explain in writing. But believe me, my sister, and do not doubt. Prepare to leave the dty at once, and meet Unde Peng. I regret that I cannot be of hdp, but you must make your own arrangements. I am mnrpmp/i only for your safety. Be very careful yourself, and do not to It- to strangers. And keep away from Siangyun.

Aflfectionatdy yours.

It was not evm signed. At the first look, Tanni was allhough mystified. Then she saw there was no reason given, and this confirmed her suspidon that he was deceiv ing her. Doubt and resentment rose again in her breast.

“What does it say?” asked Yumd impatiently.

"The same thing,” she said curtly and turned ted and white by turns.

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“You haven’t read the other letter. The one from Unde Peng.”

Tanni had forgotten it, and now with trembling hands, she opened it. It was from Nanking, and spoke briefly of his journey, in a matter-of-fect, day-by-day report of the dates of his arrival in different dties, of the preparations for evacuation of government employees from Nanking, and of the enormous diffimltifis in getting transportation to Hankow. He should be in Hankow by December, if all went well, and urged Poya and her to join Vitm. He did not forget to send his regards to Yumei.

Tanni felt a sudden comfort and even a certain happiness in the prospect of meeting Lao Peng. She read the letter to Yumei.

“There is no more trustworthy man than Unde Peng,” said Yumei. “Weren’t we happy together at Changfatsan?”

Tanni smiled. “Weren’t those few days we had with Unde

Peng wonderful?”

'“Yes, except that you were always fidgeting and waiting for your sbaoyeb. I don’t like your sbaojeh. He would not speak to me.”

Tanni took a dgarette and lighted it. As she looked at the lighter, she suddeifly remembered Poya had bought it for her. She clicked it almost spitefully.

Suddenly she thought of Siangyun. He had told her in his letter to keep away from her. That might be the reason he was avoiding her.

“Yumei, would you like to see a dance hall?” she asked.

**Siaocbieh, I have heard of it, but I could never imagine what it ishke.”

“Come with me to-night. I need your company.”

* *

*

Poya had spent the first day angry with himself. Coming home, he noticed that the car with the same licence number was still parked near the house. The candy peddler was gone, but a

beggar had taken his place at the entrance. That nighty to Kainan’s surprise, he took his wife’s family out for dinner.

The next day he thoTight of Siangyun, and remembered that she knew Tanni as Tsui Malin and also knew her address. He remembered pleasantly her talk in his hotel room, and he decided to seek her out and warn her to keep Tanni’s secret.

He went to the dance hall where Tanni and he had first met her.

He found Siangyun and asked her to dance ■with him, and then in'vited her to sit at his table.

"■Where is she?” Siangyun had asked at once.

Poya had hushed her and told her to call her only Tanni. Now somewhat vaguely he told her that he had come to warn her not to let anybody Imow about Tanni or her address.

"So that is why you came to see me?” said Siangyun (heerfiilly.

“All tight, you can trust me.”

They <^ced again. Siangyun •was a hea'vier dancer than Tanni; her body dragged a little as she followed Poya’s steps. But

she was an interesting talker, and they sat through many dances talking. Once Poya went to the washroom and on his -way across the h^ he noticed a man whom he thought he had seen at IMr. Tung’s office. When he "went back to his table he whispered to Siangyun that the man was watching him.

Tanni came in with Yumei at about ten o’clock. As they did not wish to attract attention, they took side seats along the •wall near the entrance. Yumei, blushing and giggling, stared in wonder at a spectacle she had never seen before, while Tanni sat silently in her comer, now and then rising a little firom her seat and craning her neck to survey the guests. After a few minutes, she saw Poya rise to lead Siangyun to the dance floor. Her heart jumped to her mouth.

"There he isl” she said to Yumei.

“■Where?” asked Yumei. The figures were lost in the dancing crowd. Now they emerged on the near side of the dance floor, talking incessantly and obviously enjoying themselves. Yumei saw them this time.

“The addled eggl” she muttered. She made a motion to rise and shout to Poya but Tanni held her bac^.

“So that’s itl Everything is dear now. Let us gol” said Tanni.

“Are jrou running a-way? Wait. IT! see if he can treat our siaoebieb Like this.”

Tanni was quivering •with rage.

» *T>on’t yoii do anySiing,” she said. ‘T will not run away. I will let him know that I am here and see what he is going to say when he meets me. You -wait here. I am coming back.”

She rose and walked toward the ftont of the room. When Poya and Siangyun came round, they were only twenty feet firom her.

Tanni stood alone looking at him, and their eyes suddenly met, Poya looked as if stricken and there was confusion on his &ce. But he went on dancing. Tanni’s legs were shaking under her.

The dance ended, and the dancers were returning to their seats. Tanni suddenly found the courage of anger rising within her. She slowly returned across the hall to her seat. Across the hall^ Poya’s eyes were steadily watching her.

No sooner had she sat down than she saw Poya rise and call a waiter. Siangyun had risen, too. The lights were up now. Tanni could see them coming past the crowded tables. She saw that he

turned once more to look in her direction before he started. He was ahead, and Siangyun, following him, lifted her eyes once to look at her, too.

Yumei held Tanni’s hand tightly, waiting to see what was going to happen. But as they came near, Poya turned and looked straight at tibe door. They had to pass within sis feet of where Tanni was sitting. Neither of them looked at her and they passed hurriedly by. Tanni saw their backs disappear through Ae door to the lobby.

Tanni sat Stupefied, het hands cold and numb with anger. She felt no disappointment, only a hot wave of indignation, and a shattering sense that her dream of romance had ended.

“Why don’t we go after him?” asked Yumei. “He may be waiting outside for you.”

“Let him gol The cowardl”

The band struck up the St. Louis Bites. The lights were dimmed, and the huge glass ball in the ceiling was turning round and round, throwing its coloured points of light on the jostling crowd. Tanni heard the mad squeds of saxophones.

With her senses heightened by anger, she saw what others in the room did not see. They were living in a madhouse inhabited by madly whirling shadows of grotesque human shapes — ^puny

shadows wearing masks which covered emptiness within, going around in that giddy swid. The music was shrieking its own emptiness in a wild ecstasy of destruction. The house was tottering and crumbling down like the s h a king legs of the saxophone player. Everything crashed, reeled, shrieked, swam before her like that infernal music, and the ghostly ftices of men and the white arms of women suddenly became very s mall , as we sometimes see the room before us when we sit up too long at

fli glit — an image cast upon the retina of the eye, without the inteipretation of our higher cerebral system. So it appeared to Tanni’s weak eyes. The people were dancing like automatons without a heart, except one bleeding heart that was her own.

The feeling that all was over brought her a strange inward feeling of peace within, like calm on the sea after a violent storm. And so she sat silently, even obUvious of Yumei’s hand which she was holding. A man, taking her for a woman waiting for a partner, came and spoke to her, and she looked up at him and saw only another grotesque shadow among so many. She stared at him and he went away. Yumei, who had watched and seen her throat gulping and choking witi emotion, now felt the warmth returning to her hand.

The tend suddenly stopped. A purple spotlight was focused on the dance floor. Five foreign women, white Russians, beautiftil human shapes, came out, wearing almost nothing. An "Ahl” went up from Ae audience. Yumei stood up to look, calling aloud; "Shames one to deathl” But she remained standing. The five dancers whirled and then turned somersaults on the smooth floor. They bent, standing in a row, putting there hanrig on their knees. The woman at the end jumped widi wide-open thighs over the other bending women as if they were Wdles, and then bent over at the other end like the others. One by one they jumped so — a mass of moving, turning white Umbs, and the flesh was shapely and beautiful in the purple light. When the last tall woman took her position at the end, her hips stuck up higher than tihe others, and the audience roared. The next woman tried to hurdle over her and fell hard on the floor, and the audience roared louder still.

It was not the first time Tanni had seen the disgraceful display of white limbs. She knew the beauty of the human form. But at that moment she saw human nature in all its naked brutality, and seeing it after her sharp impression of a human madhouse a moment ago, she saw the folly and futility and incompleteness of it, like the folly and futility and incompleteness of her past life, tihe life of the senses that she had known so well.

"Shames one to death. But it is beautiful,” Yumei exclaimed.

But the vision Tanni saw that night was unforgettable. She

was seized with a sense of human tragedy. To know the essence of man, one has to look at naked human figures, especially in

groui» or multitudes, and firom a physical or mental elevation, as Tanni was doing now.

“Will Poya some day sleep with that foreign woman with higher hips? Yes, he will,” she thought to herself. She saw that Poya was also a man, with hair on his legs, one of the of

the human species.

In that vision she found a new philosophy of life.

^‘Now let us go,” she said, with a strange calm seriousness which astonished Yumei.

When they got home, she took out the red silk on which was written her pledge of eternal love with Poya, and lit it with a match. With a tired smile, she watched it bum, and threw it into the iron stove. Yumei watched and could not comprehend.

She began to undress in the presence of Yumei. This had horrified Yumei when she first started doing it, after they began to

live alone, but she had become used to it.

“Here, Yumei, bum this,” she said with a sad smite, knitting out the brassiire which she had just taken fiom her breasts.

“Bum it, too?” said Yumei with a surprised look, and then she smiled and with great glee threw the brassifere into lie iron stove.

'“How about &e others?”

“Bum them, too.”

Yumei went to Tanni’s suitcase delighted as a cbiM, and took out her brassiiresandone after the other threwthem into the fire, muttering as she did so: One ought to diel”

“The human body should be clothed properly,” said Tanni to herself. Yumei did not hear. She was watching the flames shoot up in a sudden blaze.

Tanni suddenly felt dizzy, and her tibroat dioked. The floor heaved, her legs reeled, and she lost her balance, and collapsed on the carpet near the soft.

Yumei turned round, dismayed, and went to her, calling: “Siaoebieh, siaocbiebl” She lifted the white naked body, limp and warm and beautiful, to the soft, and gently slipped a pillow under Tanni’s head, and covered her with a blanket and knelt beside her,

sobbing and listening to her breath. Then she wrung out a cold towel and laid it on her forehead. She tried to give her a cup of warm tea, but her lips did not move, and the tea spilled down her neck and on the blanket.

Tanni lay for about ten minutes with Yumei holding her bands

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and rubbing her temples gently until the -warmth returned. Then her breathing became normal. Her eyelids began to move.

“Siaoehieb” Yumei called.

Her eyes opened. "Where am I?” she asked. She looked about the room and saw that she was lying on the sofe. She mo-ved her hands, then realized that they were grasped by Yumei’s rough fingers.

“How long have I been here?”

“About a quarter of an hour. Siaochieb, I was frightened.”

“Give me something to drink.”

Yumei rose and got her a cup of warm tea. Tanni touched

again the coarse fingers, as Yiunei put the cup to her mouth. She saw that Yumei's eyes were red.

Some of the tea spilled do-wn her neck again. Yumei fetched a towel and mopped her mouth and neck. As she did so she lifted the blanket and saw the beautiful white bust and her rosy pink nipples. Yumei blushed, and Tanni suddenly realized that she vas quite naked and she blushed, too.

‘®[as anybody seen me?" she asked.

"There was no one in the room but me. I didn't see what had happened and I found you lying on the floor."

Tanni shuddered. "I had an a-wful dream."

*W7hat dream?"

'"Never mind. Bring me my nightdress."

"Yes, you must get to bed."

"The body must be clothed decently," she said to herself as Yumei helped her to put the nightdress on.

Tanni rose, and as her legs stiU tottered she leaned on Yumei.

"You ate a good girl, Yumei," she said, as Yumei tucked her in

her bed. “I had a nightmare. I was in a round room full of bed quilts, and the quilts were spinning, round and rotmd, one inside another, until 1 -was suffocating. All fluffy soft cotton wool, millions of layers, turning and turning around me. I couldn’t breathe and fought my way out. The quilts then gradually lightened, and I ran out and ^e earth moved under me and I tan on and on and I suddenly realized that I was naked and many men were chasing after me. I was rolling along very ftst, more like skating than like tunning, and soon 1 was rolling on a big water-wheel and my body -was attached to the wheel, and it went round and round and my body with it going backwards, and there were

many people watching me, some of them laughing and some admiring my body. But I didn’t care, and it was a fine, soothing sensation as the wheel moved slowly. But I said to myself: *1 must get to the groimd.’ The wheel stopped and turned in the opposite direction, and I landed suddenly on my feet. And who do you think I saw . . . ? Lao Peng. He was in a monk’s robe and was staring at me, but he was smiling. I felt ashamed of my naked body, but he had a blanket and he wrapped it around me, and I felt warm and comfortable. And we went along the road, hearing the squeak of the waterwheel bdiind me. The blanket pricked my body, and I loosened it, and he said to me: *You must not; cover yourself.’ The toad was harsh to my bare feet and they bled and I limped. We went up a hiU and stood on top and looked down the valley, and he said to me: Took there. That is the

Wheel of Karma!' And I saw the wheel turning, with a big word “Nidi’ \Karmd\ in the centre, and there were still many naked women tied to it and going round with it. Then I saw there were many other wheels in the valley and they kept turning with many women on them. ‘Was I turning like that?’ I asked, and Lao Peng said: ‘Yes.’ It seemed that Lao Peng’s eyes saw through my naked body, and I had a sense of shame and wrapped my blanket tighter. Ihen I felt a cold mountain wind and I woke up and found myself in this room with. you. Wasn’t that a strange dream? What can I make of it?”

"Siaocbieb, you were looking at the foreign women turning somersaults. One ought to diel”

This brought back to her mind the events of the evening.

“Poshingkmgl Fickle loverl” she sighed.

“Don’t talk about him. I say he is not a gentleman. What was that red silk you burned with the writing on it?”

“It was my ‘phoenix pledge’ of love with Poya.” When she spoke his name her voice was gentle.

“Don’t you hate him now, taking such advantage of you?”

“Yes ... I hate him. We will go to Hankow and meet Lao Peng. I will ask him about the Wheel of Karma."

“I am glad you burned the ‘nipple-bags,’ too. Those wicked thingsl”

“I am glad, too,” said Tanni, smiling feintly.

So Tanni had lost interest in her body. The sight of the foreign naked wothen turning somersaults had caused a profound change

in her view of life. It was not until later that she saw, through Lao Peng, another vision of naked human bodies in great multitudes—the toiling arms and legs and' backs of refugee men, women and children, the aged, the gaunt, stiff bodies of women starved to death on the roadside, the freshly severed limbs and the mutilated bodies of young boys and girls, the bleeding, trudging feet of little children, beautiful and lovely in life and in death. But they were beautiful and lovely in a different sense. The two visions complemented one another. As she had seen human brutality in the naked Russian dancers, so she was to see the nobility of the human body in the rough hands of working men and women and the hurrying ankles and calf muscles and bent backs of peasant refugees and the bleeding limbs of the wounded — ^lovely and precious in sickness or in health. From the dying gasps of a baby and a young girl, she was to learn finally the value of the breath of

life. Not until then would she gain again the love of the humati

body, the love of life, because life was so tragic and so beautiful.

The next morning the telephone rang when she was still in bed.

^Tanni . . . Lien-erhl”

^^Oh, it’s youl” she said.

^*1 must explain . • . last night . .

^T>on’t explain anything • .

''But you must . . .”

She hung up the telephone abruptly.

After a while, it rang again. She hesitated whether to answer ot

not but finally she did.

'Tien-^h, you must let me explain ... I am being

watched . .

"What has that got to do with me? Don’t try to explain.”

"Lien-erh, you are angry . .

"Go on enjoying yourself. I was your kept woman. Now I am kept woman no more, not for you, nor for anybody. Go with Siangyun. She wants you . . , and you need not be afraid of seeing me. I am leaving right away."

She raised her tone towards the end and thrust the receiver away. It did not ftU into its place and lay on the bedside table and she could still hear Poya's voice faintly, coming in ridiculous met^c squeaks.

Yumei took up the teceiver and shouted; 'Tfou surincl" and spat into it, and put it back.

'To^ didn't have to do that," said Tanni.

'•He is a swine — ^that's what he is."

'You seem to be angrier than I am," said Tanni, smiling.

"Siaochieb, you did wrong to let him take adwntage of you. If I were you, I would not let mm come near me until he promised to marry me."

Tanni lay in thought. "He may come yet — ^if he really cares.”

"I will spit at him if he comes,” said Yumei.

In spite of herself, Tanni still wished that he would come. She waited for long hours in her room that day, listening for his footsteps, his knock at the door. But he did not come.

The next evening, she sailed for Hong Kong with Yumei, without leaving any word for him. After a short delay at Hong Kong, they went up to Hankow by the railway, meeting no greater hardships than two bombing raids on the way.

CHAPTER Xm

Tanni and Ydmei reached Hankow on the fifth of January, 1938. Nanking had ftllen on the thirteenth of December, and fully seven hundred and fifty thousand of its inhabitants had left. Millions of others had left their homes on the coast or in the countryside and had come up the rivet by steamship, sailboats, motor-cars, and on foot. The streets of this inland capital were jammed with refugees, soldiers, boy scouts, nurses, officials, and government employees in rbungshafi uniform. The hotels and restaurants and motion picture houses were always packed, while starving men and women, many obviously of the higher dass, roamed the streets day and night. There was no distinction between rich and poor. On New Year’s Day, a modem youi^ lady ftom Shanghai had

been seen standing on the wharf and o&ring to sell her fur coat to passengers landing ftom the steamers to get a few dollars for food. Weary soldiers constantly passed through the dty. A great many women workers, some in scout uniform, others in long gowns, were moving about, some on duty, some looking for lost relatives

sepatated £foin them on the flight firom Nanking. The fetrics aaoss the Yangtse were always full, and Wuchang, on the other side of the rirer, was as crowded as Hankow.

The greatest migration of people in all history had began. Milltrms wcic pouring from the coast into the inl ^ d , forsaking their hom es and the cities, trudging over mountains and crossing rivers, fleeing &om mass slaughter in an incomprehensible invasion by an incomprehensible enemy. The scourge of the enemy was terrible. The Chinese line had crumbled at Soochow and had rapidly Men back until within three Veeks the capital itself was raWftn. But the terror was not that of battle, of shells and tanirs and guns and grenades. It was not even the terror of bombs from the air, terrifying as might be the crash and the explosions and the sputter of flying shrapnel. It was not the terror of death, of combat, of the clang of metal against metal. Men had killed mfffi in battles since civilization began. The villagers about Chapei, for months under a hail of falling bullets, had not fiar-

sfl ken th wf homes. But not until now, since God created man, had biiman eyes seen laughing soldiers throw a baby into the air and catch it expertly on the point of a sharp bayonet as it fell and rail it sport; nor until now had blindfolded prisoners been stood up beside a trench and used as targets for bayonet practice, fiat systematic education in homicide. Two soldiers pursuing the retreating Chinese army from Soochow to Nanking, had a bet with each otiher as to who was going to kill the first hundred persons, afifl their individual records were followed day by cky with mtlinsiasin by their Comrades. The noble code of the Samnti might explain it to the people of that feudal society, but not to people of other nations. These things are not possible with nnitnal men. They were not possible even in the feudalism of medieval Europe. They were not possible with the African savages. They were not possible when men were half-cousins of gorillas, swinging from tree to tree in primitive jungles. They were not possible with the goriUas themselves. Gorillas fight ^ Trill only for thek females. There is no record in anthropology that men killed men for the delight of it even in the most primitive stages of civilization.

No, the terror was that of man, of what men of one race could do to fellow men of another race. Gorillas cannot round up gorilla prisoners, put them in a mat-shed, pour kerosene on it and

set it on fite, and laugh. Gorillas copulate in daylight in the open, but they do not enjoy looking at other he-goriOas in the act of copulation and wait in glee for their turn, and they do not put bayonets through the genital organs of the she-goriUas after they are through. Iheir delight is not so refined as to force the mate of the she-goriUa to stand by while they rape and abuse his wife.

These things do not belong properly to fiction, for they might be talr^n as the inventions of an imaginative writer on the verge of lunacy. No, these things belong to tihe authenticated, documented history of Ae Oiina War and of the Imperial Japanese Army. They will be believed only in historical arcidves, in oSidal reports of international commissions; not in fiction. Since we are dealing not with history, but with fiction, we pass them by. But we are interested in a phenomenon that lies deep in the obscure fields of the racial psychology of the Japanese and the anthropology, of the whole human race. Mencius said: "The sense of mercy is in ah men.” If Mencius is right, and I believe he is, the sense or mercy is in all Japanese, also. But we ate conftonted here with the need for an explanation of human evil, as well as of human good. All religions and all philosophies have postulated the existence of evil in the human heart. Religion postulates the Devil, because the Devil is as necessary to religion as God. The Hebrew conc^t of the struggle between the “Good Spirit” and the "Evil Spirit” is typical, and Christian theology fictionizes Gamaliel and Beelzebub. Only at special times and in special circumstances, does man, a compound of the angel and the devh, wholly lose his sense of

gliatne and let the devil, always submerged in him, dominate him entirely. The realms of abnormal and criminal psychology andpf mass and race psychology must be co-ordinat^ to tc^e the matter plain, and we know too little of either.

Individual sexual exhibitionism has been explained. But how explain the feet that the Imperial Japanese Army, of Samurai tradirinn, took off their pants and masturbated in public en mme, before the eyes of the world, thinking that they were exhibiting themselves only in a remote Asiatic city called N anking ? How explain the Imperial Japanese Army at aU — ^its mind, its ideology, ihe crudity of its tactics, its combination of ill-digested Western milimrism and equally ill-digested Chinese Confiic iani sm un-successfully transplanted upon the medieval structure of Japan’s own feudal Shintoism? What did the Japanese officers think of it?

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What did the Japanese privates think of themselves? Why didn’t the Japanese officers stop it? Could they stop it? Or did they encourage and even force the privates to do it in a stupid con-ception of terroristic tactics? Even then, the problem is too complex. “Ejiforced lack of discipline” cotdd not be an adequate e^lanation for reckless, senseless, and indiscriminate looting, corruption, and bestiality.

We can go back to a parallel in Chinese history, where the same delight in slaughter reached the proportions of downright lunacy in Chang Hsienchung. This maniac overran Szechuen in the beginning of the seventeenth century, when the Ming Empire had fallen into chaos through misrule before it collapsed under the Manchu invasion. The record of Chang's army, glorifying human slaughter into a religion, has no parallel in all Chinese history. It could not be explained except as the actions of a maniac. Too little remains in the annals for us to understand the gradual darkening of Chang Hsienchting's mind. He may have had some great personal catastrophe, perhaps a great disappointment in love. A clue can be found only in his slogan: ''Heaembas not been unkind to man, but man has been ungratef$d to Heaven. Therefore Shah! Shah! Shah! 'Kill! Kill! Kill!'* The story is still told that once he had built a pyramid of chopped-off women's bound feet. He could not find a pair of feet small enough to decorate the top. He thought then of his own fevourite concubine, who had the smallest pair of feet he had ever seen. Therefore he ordered his concubme's feet chopped off. As he looked at the pyramid of women's feet, now completed, he laughed and was satisfied. But why did Chang Hsienchung say that man was ungrateful to Heaven, which necessitated his slaughtering men on behalf of Heaven? What great betrayal had upset his mind? Had his best fi:iend taken his gloved ficom him that he should take his revenge on all mankind?

But Chang only wanted to exterminate ungrateful mankind. He did not eajject to tide the people either by himself or through

his puppets after the slaughter. His lunacy was confined within the sphere of his noania. Otherwise he was normal. He did not try to massacre the people and at the same time create a '“New cider.” Hfe exterminated others and he e:q)ected to be exterminated by others. He killed and laughed, he was killed and also laughed as he died.

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Chang Hsienchung failed because he lored wanton slaughter. So did the Taiping Rebellion. So has Japan Mled. It was to escape from this terror of the New Order in the occupied areas, which the Japanese have grimly determined to call ‘‘Paradise” {]otu\ that forty mihion refugees abandoned their homes and fled toward the new capital of Hankow, and spread into the interior.

War does strange things to people.

It meant a thousand dferent things to the tnilTinfig of refugees and to those who remained behind and those who, living in the vast hinterland, now saw those countless hordes coming up the river and over the mountains. There was not one whose life was not afiected by the mgration and the long years of war and blockade. To m a n y, it meant a sudden change of habits, leaving behind old, &nuliar homesteads and comparative comforts, and

entering upon the rigorous life of the high road and a primitive style of existence. To some it was a wretched departure fiom “civilization,” to others a surprising discovery of new values and how much man can do without and how few the essentials of living are. To still others, it was a discovery of the real rhina and her great common people living as they have been living for four tihousand years, of her immensity of land and cities and tnrmnftiing and rivets and lakes that one had read about in the geography books at school.

Many young students, used to private motor-cars, found the unexpected strength to trudge a thousand miles across mountains and valleys. It meant the change from electric hghts to dim smoky oil lamps, from congested terrace houses and street-cars to fermhouses and poultry yards and threshing floors, from steam heat to unheated rooms and earthen floors, from the smell of petrol to the smell of hay, from air-cooling to Nature’s vaster S3?stcm of ventilation called the mountain breeze and the sight of the open starry sky. Modem ladies who had never seen an egg hatched found that they had to cut a chicken’s throat with a Wniffs held in a trembling hand and pluck and clean it, if they wanted to eat chicken. Many of the rich lost their homes and fortunes; many lost their relatives; many went through soul-scarring experiences. Parents, unable to get ^at tickets for all the famil y, were com-pelled to leave one or two elder children behind and could never forgive themselves. Other parents saw their children pushed into the rivet from an overcrowded junk or steamboat; they went on,

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as they had to, and the memory went with th^. For the war ramff like a mighty storm and swept these millions of men and women and children like autumn leaves, scattering them in all directions, letting them fell to lie for a while on the ground in some protected comer, until a new gust swept them up into whirlwind. Since the storm could not blow everywhere at once, there was usually a corner where some leaves settled, a place where the sun shone and there was a temporary haven of peace.

The history of the Oiina War, like the history of all great movements, is written upon the minds and hearts of its generation. Fifty or a hundred years ftom now, tea-house gossip and old wives' tales will carry on the stories of thousands of these storm-swept leaves. Every leaf in the storm is an individual wiA a heart and feelings and aspirations and longings, and each is as important as the others. Our task here is to trace what the war did to one woman, one leaf among the millions.

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Tanni was so changed that Lao Peng could hardly believe his eyes when they met. She had gone to his bank and learned that he

was working with the Buddhist Red Gross, across the river at Wuchang. Her fece looked thinner and pale, her eyes deeper and than before. She had changed her dress to a simple blue cottpn gown. In the new war capital, it was bad taste to be “smart.” In this cotton dress, with broad sleeves hanging loosely over her body, she felt happy, not only because she did not wish to invite criticism, but also because she was caught up by the spirit of the war atmosphere. And with the cloth shoes, her gait also had altered, and she splashed about in the mud of Wuchang with a sense of elation and feeedom.

But it was not only her appearance that had changed. All through the journey to Hankow, she had been greatly depressed. Yumei, seeing her lying in bed in the daytime, well in body but sick in her som, silent for hours, wondered what was going on in her mififl- Tanni formed the habit of saying: ^'What does it matter?” when Yumei asked her a question on some practical matter.

She had a feeling that she had been looking into someone’s garden and wantii^ to go in and had been ruhlessly shut out Paofon’s and Dimfeagrance’s attitude hurt almost as much as

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Poya’s apparent betrayal. She had left, or been left by, other men

before, but her experience with Po3ra was something deeper, joined with her dream of being of an old, big family . The

final shock had not only shattered her hope but had changed her attitude toward ^ romance. Defeated once more, and acknow-ledging defeat with a sad finality, yet she also seemed to have transcended love.

On the harrowing railway journey they had not slept properly. It was not until their arrival at Hankow doat her spirits to

revive.

' They found their way through the narrow crooked cobbled streets of Wuchang to the Buddhist Red Cross War Relief Headquarters near the top of the hiU on which the famous Yellow Stork Tower stood. Lao Peng had been busy tfinding the wounded, and rushed out at the news of their arrival. He greeted them widi the warmth of old, separated ftiends and the keen excitement of the newly met.

"Oh, Uncle Peng. You are always the same good Unde Peng."

"Where is Poya? Hasn't he come with you?"

"Don't talk about him," she said in a low voice. "I will tell you later."

“Tanni, you have changed.”

“Yes, I know I am looldng like a ghost. What does it matter?”

"Something has happened to you. You are a different woman.”

“Ami?”

“Yes,” said Lao Peng, surveying her through his big spectades. “You were very pretty and livdy when I IdEt you at Shanghai. Now you ate beautiful — ^truly beautiful.” He looked at her deep black eyes with the tinge of sorrow in them.

Her pale face flushed a little. “I must have lost weight. Look at my loose gown.” She looked down at herself and laughed, but it was a weary laugh. 'Tet’s not talk about me. What are you doing here?”

“This is the Buddhist Red Cross, you know. We ate trying to take care of refugees, and orphans and wounded soldiers, too. We are short of hands, short of medicine, short of money, short of everything.”

Her face lit, and she said eagerly: “I have come to join you, and Yumei, too, as I promised.” Looking up at him, she added: “I want to learn from you.”

“I am glad,” said Lao Peng briefly, looking steadily doMim at her. He could see that the emotional experience in Shanghai had changed her. He had noticed in her eyes a hint of sadness on their journey from Peiping, but now it was something deeper, and there was a ca lm on her face which lent her a beauty sudi as one sees only in mature women who have known personal sorrow.

He led them through an unheated reception-room with l»te bamboo furniture. It was a house owned by the temple near by. Some Buddhist magazines were lying on a small table, and there were woodcut prints on the w^, showing the legend of the incarnations of a cow and advising against slaughter. In the court behind there was a small library. A wealthy family of Buddhists, who had some connection with the monks, occupied the ground floor. They passed through the parlour to the stairs and went to the upper floor, where Lao Peng had a bed space in the reading-room, which was not much used. The room was unheated except by the heat which came up ftom the parlour. Whenever the door was opened, a cold blast blew in, but Lao Peng was dad for unheated rooms, and he said it was not a hardship. The window overlooked the Yangtse River, pardy hidden by a big tree in the foreground. There was no bed. Lao Peng’s roll of bedding lay in a comer on the wooden floor. The floor was unpainted and grey, but dry.

“It is a luxurious room, too good for me alone. But,” he whispered, “the people downstairs object to having refugees up here. I have been wanting to get a few in. We’ve been turning away refugees every day — for lack of space and money and food. And so here it is — ^I am enjoying this room all alone.”

*^ill there be a place for us if we move over?” asked Tanni.

“I don’t see where we can put you,” he said. “But you can stay across the river and come here during the day.”

As they went down, the old stairs creaked under Lao Peng’s heavy tread. The house was connected with the temple by a back door, and Lao Peng led them into the temple. It had two courts, with the larger at the back. Refugees were crowded into the halls and court-yards. Giildren were playing and laughing in the mild whiter sun. Mats were spread ever3rwhere below the niches of the Biiddhas. Many of the refugees greeted Lao Peng with fluniliai . smiles. A mother and three children had a comer in the stone yard. The woman was holding a baby in her ar ms . She greeted

Lao Peng, moving a little as if to offer a comer of her mat, as a hostess would offer a guest entrance to her home. Her earthen

saucepan was standing on a small earthen stove.

“Have you still got rice?” asked Lao Peng.

“Yes, Uncle, we have enough to last three days,” said the woman with a snule.

“How can the four of you live on two chin of rice for four days?”

“We have enough, Uncle,” the woman protested. “The little one is fed at the breast. We are satisfied.”

**You must cat mote. I will get a bit of soya-bean sauce for you and perhaps a few ounces of pickled turnips, eh?”

The two elder children tried shamefully to conceal their delight. “And a little bean curd, Uncle?” said the six-year-old boy.

“You gluttonsl” cried the mother. “You are like beggars.”

“You shall have bean curd,” said Lao Peng with a wink at the child.

“They are my refugees,” said Lao Peng in a low voice to Tanni, as they passed on.

“They came only two days ago. The temple would not admit

them because it was filled up. lie poor woman had come all the ‘ way ftom Hsuancheng. I took them in on my own responsibility. I would not see her and her children sent away. The man in charge said; llet them stay if you can find a place for th«n.’ I tried to persuade ihe femily downstairs to let them stay with us, but they would not. Well, you sec the place they got. It was wet and it stank with the sewage near by, but I cleaned it up and put them there, and there they are.”

They went into the back hall, where besides the eighteen hhon on the sides was a great gilt Buddha, some twenty fi^ high. The refugees’ parcels, ^thing pots, and bowls were stacked on the stone bases of the statues. A black ketde was standing on the toes of a hhan sitting with crossed legs. There was barely space to walk through, and they remained near the ejitrance. While Lao Peng was taking with a man standing in one comer, Yumei went down on her knees and kowtowed to the Buddha. IVice she rose to her feet and fell upon her knees again, and whm she had kow-towed three times, she was very happy, and came up to Tanni, who had been left alone and said; *TDon’t you worship the Buddha?”

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'TMo, I never did,’^ Tanni replied.

She raised her head. The half-closed eyes of the gig^c Buddha seemed to be looking down upon her from a great height. Perhaps she was oversensitive, as many passionate natures are. She must have seen that look many times, but perhaps the events of the past month had given her a comprehension she had not had before. The Buddha^s eyelids were half-closed, showing part of the black of the eyes in a mood of tender pity and wistful understanding. It was the look of a god who knew all the sins and sorrows of humanity, who had been looking down upon a toiling and suffering world for ages past with the same veiled world detachment and the same benign concern. Buddhist sculpture had created that mysterious look of pity, terrifying in its drearoy suggestion of wisdom, curiously matched with what might be called wide and sensuous lips. The fece was not hard and harrowed; it was fleshy, calm, distinctly feminine, even motherly, full of passion, more like the Christian Madonna than the face of the Saviour on the Cross. There was compassion on the fece of the Buddha, wisdom in his eyes, and courage in his supreme calm. And because the lips suggested that Buddha knew passion also, it made him incomparably greater and more human . Tanni saw it and felt its power; it was almost like a knowing woman looking on lustful, sinful men. Looking up at it high above, Tanni was for the moment held in a spell as if she, too, could look at life with the same understanding and say: ^^The pity of it alll” Perhaps this was what religion meant. Above tiie Buddha, she read on a wooden signboard the gilt and carved words: fo t^u pf"

(^'Our Buddha Is Mercfful”). She too was one of the suffering

refugees in this hall, that the Buddha was looking kindly upon. She felt she almost could pray to the Divine Essence for herself, and for Poya. For even as one shut out firom a garden and come away still keeps thinking of the garden, so Poya still remained at the back of her mind.

Coming out, she found that Lao Peng and Yumei had already left the hall.

^TTou saw that man I was talking to?" said Lao Peng. comes firom an old Soochow femily. He told me they were worth thirty thousand dollars, and now they are penniless. They wet^ bombed out of their homes, and they left hurriedly with a few hundred dollars. With the costly voyage they have spent their

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last penny. It is harder on them than on the poor who are used to hardships . .

^t is all so dramatic," said Tanni.

"You haven't seen drama yet," said Lao Peng, you had seen

them coming up the river last month, as I did . . ."

“Who cooks for you here?” she suddenly asked. “And what do you do during the day?”

"The temple cooks my meals. And somehow I am kept always busy.”

“Can you spend the rest of the day with us?”

“I’ll Imve to go and get the soya beans and pickled turnips I promised the children. Then I will go out with you.”

About four o’clock, they left the temple and went up to the YeUow Stork Tower. The Tower was over a thousand years old. Tanni had seen a Sung Dynasty painting which shows it as an imposing structure of terraces and painted girders and balconies and curving roofs, but now it had been reb^t and changed into an ugly brick building of nondescript foreign style. It had been a place for tourists to go up and look down upon the river, and a restaurant had served meals there. But because of its strategic position, it was now partly closed to the public and was occupied by soldiers. They went up the steps. The cUmb was not hard, but Yumei, with the child growing in her, panted a litde as she readied the top.

They went to a side terrace where tea was still being served and took a table overlooking the river. It was the habit of the crafty Hupeh people, (“Nine-headed birds in heaven and Hupeh people on earth,” the saying goes) to go up the Yellow Stork Tower in

the afternoon and sit and drink tea and enjoy watching the boats being overturned by the swift current at the concourse of the Han and the Yangtse rivers, where the three great cities, Wuchang. Hanyang, and Hankow stand. It was told that “H/ipeh Lao** would boast to one another about the number of boats they tod seen capsized in one afternoon, and they would often delay going home for supper in the hope of improving their records of accidents for the day. The Hupeh people never admitted this, but it was said against them by the people ftom other provinces, because of their noisy combativeness — a survival perhaps of the tradition of the ancient Qi’u imriors.

The afternoon sun vras shining directly upon Hanyang city on

the west side of the river. Smoke ftom the diirmeys of the great Hanyang Iron Works filled the distant sky with a turbid grey layer, but below on the Parrot Islet, they saw in the bright sun-light willow trees and farmers’ houses. Many boats were plying up and down on the river, and further down, to the north-east, a few foreign gunboats were anchored opposite the city of Hankoiv. The Han River flowing into the Yangtse between Hanyang and Hankow was partly visible, and at the concourse there were long Itnfts of junks closely packed together like a forest, with their masts pointing skyrward. For here lay Hankow, controlling the

trade of all central China with Shanghai and the foreign markets. Imposing concrete structures, the Custom House and the Butterfield and Swire Building, and the houses of the former foreign concessions, were clearly visible, evidences of wealth and prosperity.

‘ ‘You see there the foreign houses in Hankow,” said Lao Peng. “The people there are very rich. Some of them never come across the river. They can never understand.”

Tanni looked at Lao Peng and smiled. The old warmth and solicitude for his well-being came back to her. She was happy and in her rustic attire she felt in tune with him and with the surroundings. His weathered fece seemed to her beautiful in the afternoon sun.

“Understand what?” she asked.

“The misery on this side of the river.”

He sat quiet for a few moments, his heavy figure sunk de^ in the old rattan chair.

“Tell me what happened to Poya?” he asked, at last.

**^osbingkng!” she said. “I left without seeing him.”

“He is not a gentleman,” interposed Yumei. “He was just

taking advantage of our siaocbieb**

“Yumei is funny,” said Tanni with a laugh. “She called him 'swine’ and spat at him over the telephone.”

“■What was the matter?” said Lao Peng, knitting his brows anxiously.

“Didn’t I do right?” cried Yumei hotly. “I didn’t like him the first moment I saw him. He made siaoebieb cry the first time th^ met. And siaoebieb still went out with him, and he would not maa^ her. He stopped coming to see her, and one night we saw him dancing with another woman. He just stopped coming to see her.”

“I cannot understand.”

So Tanni told him all that had happened. He listened quietly until she had finished, and then asked: “Did you tell liim the story you told me?”

“I told him something, but he said he didn’t want to hear what I had done before. And I thought it just as well.”

“So you quarrelled.”

“We didn’t quaael. But I didn’t want to hear any eT plantn-inn
Had I not seen him with another woman with my own eyes?
Then we left without seeing him. But, Uncle Peng, it is all right.
I am through with him and with all of that.”

'Tm afraid you are hasty. He thought all the world of you.”

Tanni laughed bitterly. “I hate himl” Her eyes had lost tbHi-
calm again. 'Tt was foolish of me, to think of marrying him. If I
had been a femily girl, he would not have treated me so,”

“I am very sorty,” said Lao Peng. “It was my feult. If I had
been with you, this could not have happened. Perhaps there was
something in it we don’t know.”

“No,” said Tanni. “Of course it is not your feult. You are the
kind of man who takes blame upon himself.”

“He has not written me,” said Lao Peng. “But I thinV he will”

They went down for a walk before supper on the new streets of
the waterfront between Pinghumen and Hanyangmen, where a
section of the old city wall had been tom down and changed into a
main street with modern brick buildings. Although this was
January the seventh, refugees were still arriving from the river
and by the railwa]^ from north and south. Aimless wanderers
jostled each other in the streets — ^labourers, peasants, merchants,

students, soldiers in uniform. The refugees were dressed in all imaginable garments of silk, cotton, and foreign goods and living in all stages of misery.

As they came down from the Yellow Stork Tower, Tanni saw on an embankment built over a road a gigantic picture that stretched a hundred and fifty feet along the wall. It was a picture of great companies of marching soldiers, and a few field-gun units in, tiie foreground and some civilian men and women walking in front, centreing around General Chiang Kaishek in a white cape riding on a white horse. It seemed to symbolize a modem nation, ^thexed and united around one great leader, marrying forward in a long procession, suggesting great hope and new strength. It

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■was tie 'work of twenty modern artists and the faces in the cro'wd were very realistic, such as were never painted by the classical painters.

‘TOhere is our great leader,” said Lao Peng. “I hear that he has rejected the Japanese peace offers. Last month, after the fell of Nanking, there were rumours of peace. Many government

bdlieved the end had come. Our best armies have been destroyed. We must have lost three hundred or four hundred thousand soldiers at Shanghai — ^includit^ some of the best trained. I suspect that many of our oflBcials were ready to sue for peace. But General Chiang came to Hankow and said Tight onl' and we are fighting on."

"Where did you learn this?"

^Trom General Pai Tsunghsi. I know him. He told me that ast month the German Ambassador came to General and Madame Qhiang, bringing Japanese peace terms. After he had told them the terms, ISfedatne Chiang handed him his bowl of tea and asked: 'And how ate your children?' "

"That is couragel" cried Tanni. "How I wish I could see hetl"

"I hear she is going to Hong Kong for a treatment, but -will soon be back. ^Ji^en there is an air raid, you will see her. She comes out after the raid and helps to gather the orphans. Can yon wonder that our morale is so high? Our people have never had such a government before, never one that cared for the welfere of the war victims."

Lao Peng carried in his haisel a cloth bag, tied by s tring s, in which he kept many things. This was one of his bachelor habits. In a cigMette tin in the bag he kept his banknotes and coins, mi'mi

with his cigarettes. At a comer, as they turned into the dty, Tanni saw a group of young country children sirring on the road-side. He went over to the children, and talring out the cigarette tin, gave a doUar banknote to them. The children seemed to esi>ect it and thanked him.

"What good does that do?" he said with a laugh as he turned away. "They were here ten days ago and they are still here. I couldn't find a place for them. What else can I do?"

They went into a small restaurant. Food was plentiful and they ordered •wine and soup and some beef, ftied hard and oilyand pungent with p^per.

Lao Peng drank his soup noisily and seemed to have an enormous appetite.

"You are a happy man, aren't you?" asked Tanni. The fascination of this middle-aged man was strong upon her.

"Happy?" he said. have no worries and I have a dear consdence, if that is what you mean."

Tanni looked thoughtful. “I don’t know what I would have done if I had not known you,” she said. ‘T suppose I would have stayed in Shanghai.”

CHAPTER XIV

For the nest week, Tanni and Yumei came across the rivet each day to help Lao Peng at the temple, and went back to their hotel each night. Tanni enjoyed their work during the day, the broad-casts at night, the war news in the papers. The exdtement of all the goings-on of the wartime capital seemed to keep her fully occupied. For like any woman who had turned her back upon the home, whether out of choice or out of necessity, she had to have work and an aim of some kind.

But there was still something that tied her to her old life. Lao Peng had told her to go to the money shop for mail, for he insisted that Poya would stirely write, if not to her, at least to him. So in spite of herself she went to the Chungfoo Money Shop every morning.

“Is there no letter?” she asked at the desk for the tenth day.

“No,” answered the derk.

“Are you sture?” The derk contemplated her pale fece and deep, black eyes and thought again that she was unreasonable.

‘'Why should I deceive you? Is it any fault of mine if your friend does not write you?” he said.

Tanni walked away with evident disappointment.

“You stiU love hir^” Yumei said.

“I love him and I hate him,” said Tanni. “But I should like to know what he has to say for himself.”

But Tanni \pas happy in the war relief work. It was of the kind described as tnalring oneself useful, without schedule or set duties. It consisted of doing odd little things, like writing letters for

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refugees, receiving inquiries, sending for doctors, orderiog a few stools from a carpenter shop, providing for newcomers, helping refugees to advertise for missing relatives, chasing all over the cities to locate people, or makmg arrangements for departuie when some refugees had heard from relatives and decided to go further inland. On some days there would be a rush of work, and on others there would be nothing to do. On the less busy days the three of them would go to the r^way station to watch the arrival of travellers and refugees.

The twelve-year-old son of Lao Peng’s refugee f amil y feU sick from exposure and ran a high fever. Lao Peng, after long argument, had him brought to fis own room, and Tanni had to go out and buy a small earthen stove on whi^ to boil water and make medicinal stews. It was altogether a new experience stranger to her than her meeting with Poya. Sometimes as she sat alone with the sick boy, brooding and thinking, it seemed that she was living through a dream. The boy, who was called Gold Luck, would stare at her with wondering eyes as she was washing his face and hands. The experience was as strange to the country boy as it was to Tanni. She developed a kind of affection for him, and he told her stories of his home town and of their j oumey — and said they were ink makers of Hsuancheng. She felt her first triumph as she watched his fever go down. By the time he was able to get up, she had lost her habit of saying; "What does it matter?”

But when daily they had to turn away newcomers, it becanae increasingly clear to Lao Peng that they were in the people’s -way and not doing as much good as they might. Lao Peng had formed acquaintance with a number of wayside refugees who had found abode in odd comers of the neighbourhood, ^eir condition was deplorable, and, being unable to take them into the temple, Lao Peng had gone to them in the streets to help them according to their needs. Sometimes he sent the sick to the hospitals and insisted that the hospitals take them in. He often discussed with Tanni his idea of finding a house for refugees which they could run to their own satisfection.

The matter was brought to a climax one day when a family of three was turned away ftom the temple. The fether had a girl of ten and a boy of six. The girl was so sick that she was hardly aUe to walk. Tanni was there when they came. The girl, she learned, coughed and perspired at night. Her fece was emaciated, but her,

big eyes looked wistfully at Taoni. Tanni could not bear the idea of sendLag her away and asked them to wait while she spoke to Lao Peng. They spent a whole morning findinga femily who would the femily in with Lao Peng offering to pay for their rent and food.

Whenever she could, Tanni went to visit the girl, whose namp. was Pinpin. She was suffering &om consumption, but she was always ^eerfiil and would insist that she was all right. The fether sat groaning in the house or sometimes disappeared for a whole day, leaving the girl and her brother alone. Pinpin told her that they were ftom Ctunkiang, and that they had left late in November when Nanking was being evacuated. Her fether could get together only six htmdred dollars and could obtain only three boat tickets for a femily of four. He was forced to leave the fifteen-year-old brother behind, with thirty dollars, to his own way to Hankow. It was leaving the boy to fete, and the parting was like death. The boy had come to the wh^ to see

them ofF, and when he was waving ferewell her fether had almost jumped off the boat, and he had collapsed as the steamer pulled away. After Nanking fell and the new flood of refugees came and told terrible stories of the atrocities they had seen and of the executions of forty-two thousand able-bodied young civilians, the fether brooded and beat his chest, accusing hims elf of murder and hop^ against hope that his son would find his -way to Hankow.

They Imd lived practically like beggars since their arrival. Due to the exposure and lack of food, Pinpin had fellen ill and now she coughed a great deal and began to spit blood. Her fether became irritable and sometimes spoke harshly to her, asking if she could not “repay her brother’s fife” by dying in her brother’s place, and flien in the next moment he would be stricken with remorse and weep profusely and beg her forgiveness. Pinpin had to look che^ful and suppress her coughs in her fether’s presence and tell him that she was all right.

One day Lao Peng proposed to Tanni that they go for a walk, partly wi& the hope of finding a 'house which they could rent cheaply for refugee quarters. The sun was shining and it was unusu^y mild for Hankow winter, an ideal day for an outing. So after lunch they set out toward the Chunghomen suburb. They passed the Shai Lake, seeing only smml houses in crowded neighbourhoods, and then Lao Peng led them on in the direction of the Hungshan Hill.

They went eastward along the road into open country with stretches of water and patches of bare cotton fields, with here and there hamlets and plots of vegetable gardens.

The Hungshan stood over the Little Lake and the afternoon siin was shining directly upon it. Lao Peng pointed out a clump of trees and a few houses in the distance a little way up thehm. ^

place like that would be ideal,*’ he said.

^^But why choose a place so ftr away?” asked Tanni.

^^Because it is more peaceful, and because rent is cheaper, and because all the suitable houses in the city are filled.”

They went up the slope for two or three //. Looking down, they saw the Wuchang city below them, witli the tiers of houses on the Snake Hill, and below masses of roofs, rusty-red and black. At their feet lay the Sandy Lake and the Litde Lake, and the jagged skyline of Hankow, visible across the Yangtse. The winter landscape was grey and dour, but not without a sombre, dreary beauty of its own. The water was low in the lakes, revealing stretches of marsh grown over with water weeds that bent and

waved in the wind.

As they went on up the paved mountain road, they came to a long stone wall of what seemed to be some rich man’s residence. The inscriptions on the waU were so weathered that they were hardly rea^ble. An old stone gate stood open, and they went in. Set in the large grounds they saw what seemed to be a deserted house. Grass had grown up through the chinks between the stone slabs of the walk which led to a door that was closed, but falling apart, so that Lao Peng coxdd easily push it open.

The light shining in through the latticed windows showed a bare room with a few black varnished chairs. Tattered scrolls hung on the wall, awry and coated with dust. Cobwebs stretched across the comers and the windows. There was the smell of dry decay which comes into a house long forsaken by human beings. They crossed the room and entered another on the right, with a good lacquer bed in it and a desk and bookcases. A very old but fine mat still lay on the bed, with patches of darker hue where it had been most slept upon. One comer was cluttered with various household articles, including a big lacquered wooden bathtub with golden tracings that had seen its ^y of glory. Beside it the broken tiles were covered with sand, apparendy an anthill. This was a

western toom, and in the btightei light they could see that the grey tile floot was dry.

Lao Peng wet his finger and broke a hole in the window paper &cing the inside.

‘"njere is a court-yard and more houses within!” he

They went in to the centre room again and pushed open the door leading to the inner rourt-yard. It was paved with fine stone slabs. An old glazed fish jar two or three feet in diameter stood in one comer. A coating of moss had grown over it, and the water w^s black and thick with mud.

Tanni went exploring ahead, and lightly pushed open the door of the eastern house. It creaked on its hinges. Suddenly she jumped back with a cry, and clutched Lao Peng.

“What is it?” he asked.

“There are two coffins in there!”

Lao Peng stepped in. Two huge co ffins , varnished black, rested on benches along the walL

Tanni was shivering. “Let’s get out.”

They left the house, closing the doors behind them, and went

out into the road, and followed it until they came to a house, where they saw an old &tmer.

“Old Unde,” Lao Peng asked him, “is that old house for rent? There seems to be no one living in it.”

The old fijimer’s &ce broke into a smile and he said: “Are yon afraid of ghosts?”

“No. why?”

“That house is haunted. It has not been lived in for ten years. The owners are gone nobody knows where.”

“It has no owner then?”

“No. If it weren’t haunted, someone would have taken it long ago. There was bad luck in that femily. The owner was a magistrate of Huangpi who had come firom Kiangsi. After he di^ the concubine ran away aijid one after another of the femily die^ until only the younger son and the daughter-in-law re-mained. Then the son ran away and the young daughter-in-law hanged herself.”

“What are the two coflSns in the house?”

“The elder son had wasted all his money, and after his mother died he was not able to take his patents’ ^dies back to Kiangsi

for proper butiaL”

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Lao Peng lianked the feimer and totned back to the old house again. He went in to suivey it once more, while Tanni waited outside. When he came out at last he told her that there were twelve rooms with a large garden in the back, below a grove of spruce and pines.

'•You are not thinking of living in a haunted house, are you?” she asked. ‘T was so ftightened by the coffins.”

"There is no need to be aficaid,” he said. "As for the coffins I will sleep in diat room if nobody else will. I don’t believe in haunted houses. Good or bad luck comes only according to those who are living in a house. There are no ghosts, or if there are, they never bother people with a cleat conscience. We can soon fill this place with the voices of children and men and women, and make it into a happy place for happy people. It is quite ideal, because we don’t have to pay rent.”

So in a few days’ time, the old house was transformed. Tanni bought some red paper and cut it into squares and wrote on them the characters ^‘Luck” and “Spring” and pasted them in the shape of diamonds on the doors and walls of different rooms. She wrote

the four words: " Wofo t^^upeP* (“Our Buddha Is Merciful”) on a paper and pasted it across the stone lintel. There were many thmgs to be done, such as the purchase of rice and lamps and bendies and cooking utensils. Gold Luck, the boy whom Tanni had nursed back to health, proved himself very useful and willing to do anything she sent him to do.

''You have driven away the ghosts,” the old &rmer said to Lao Peng. “How dare they remain here now? The evil spirit shuns the good spirit.”

At table, as they were eating, Lao Peng said to Tanni and Yumeh “Itisunbelievablycheap to save lives. Wehavespent only three hundred dollars in all. The rice and other food will not cost us much.”

"But Pinpin needs more meat and eggs,” said Tanni. “She has not improved at all, and I am worried for her.”

In the afternoons, when the sun was shining, Tanni would go out to sit on a knoll and watch the sunset across the river, sometimes alone, sometimes with Lao Peng or the children. The spring and autumn rains had cut a g^ey through the slope, running down to the lake. Further lay die fields where cotton was grown in spring, but which now lay in bleached patches of stubble. The land was cut up and defined by the marshy, sandy

shores of the lakes, and islets and sandbats stood up in the water. From the hill the waters were like sheets of mirror, reflecting the blue sky so that Tanni could even see the clouds sailing across i-Tifttn- ^ good days she could get glimpses of the Han River in the distance, a glowing, glistening safiron band reflecting the sunset. Lao Peng, sitting with her, could see the sunset lend its rosy warmth to the pallor of her face. In the early morning or late at <n‘ gbtj a layer of murky haze would settle over the lakes, stretching straight to the city walls. On some mornings, there would be frost on the ground, glittering in the morning sun like snow, and making the lakes black in comparison.

One afternoon, sitting alone upon her fevourite rock on the knoll, she saw Gold Luck coming back from the city. An old woman was with bim. The old woman’s steps were slow and unsteady, and her head shook constantly. When they were near, he saw Tanni and pointed her out to the old woman, saying: “There is the Ktut/^n chiebchteb” for he had come to call Tanni “Sister Goddess of Mercy.” Then he ran up to Tanni, and said: “I have brought this old woman along to our place. I knew you would not mind.”

“Of course not,” she replied.

The woman came near to Tanni, and touched her with her shaking hands. Her eyes were filmy and blurred.

“I ought to knftfti down,” she said, ‘Tiut my old knees are too weak. I have not many days to live and I shall not bother you long, if you will be kind enough to take me in.” Her old eyes were wrinkled into narrow slits to look up at Tanm.

“Of course we will take you in. Grandmother,” said Tanm.

The old woman wiped her eyes and sighed. **1 have not many days to live,” she repeated. “Buddha will bless you. This boy has told me about you. I am an old woman and all alone. I want only a comet to die in, in peace.”

Tanni rose and hmped the old woman to the house. Most of the rooms were occupied. When the old woman saw the large room where the coffins were, she said that she would prefer that room, and that she liked to be alone. Tottering to the coffins, she touched them for a long while with admiration, and drew a long breath and muttered somethiog to herself.

“Is there someone in each of these?” she asked lao Peng.

“Yes.”

“They would be too good for me. I haven’t that luck,” she said softly, shaking her head.

The old woman proved to be secretive, and since she was unable to move about much, she usually stayed in her room or sat in the yard just outside her door. She ate alone and Yumei or Gold Luck had to bring her food.

Then there came a girl student and her mother, whom Lao Peng and Tanni met one day on the road outside Hmyangmen. The mother was sitting by the roadside holding two black cloth parcels, while the girl, who was about eighteen, stood listlessly by with a dazed expression. When Lao Peng approached, the girl was frightened and tried to shield her mother, and when Tanni went up, the girl stared indignantly at her.

“Never mind her,’ ’ said the mother , and to her daughter, she said: ‘Tfueh-o, these are good people.” The mother pointed to her head to suggest that something was wrong with her daughter’s mind.

When they had been brought up the hill, Tanni gradually learned their story. Yueh-o, when not in her depressed moo4 talked quite normally. She had been to a Qnistian school and het parents had owned a good small restaurant in Nanking . When the capital was threatened, her parents told her to go to Ebnkow with their neighbours, but since they were over they would stay by their restaurant, for nothing could happen to people of thek age. Yueh-o came up the river and became separated from her

neighbours. One day early in January, she fotind her mother in the streets, purely by accident. Her mother was a strong woman and looked quite well in spite of het terrible experience. The girl was so happy at this unexpected reunion that she nearly went mad. She could not teU the story of her mother’s shame, and the older woman herself told it to Tanni.

“Five Japs came one day and ordered food, and we had to serve them. Then they would not leave after eating. . . . Yes, I was raped by those five soldiers, an old woman over fifty. My husband was a powerful man and he threw pots and pans and knives at the soldiers and cut one fellow’s free. They shot him instantly. Yes, an old woman of fifty. . . . Can you see any beautyinmy old wrinkled free? ThebeastsI”

So there -ros enough excitement in that house of charity, presided over by Lao Peng and Tanni, who was known as his niece and who was now called “Sister Goddess of Mercy”

(Kuafs^in cbiebciieb) by all the rejEiigees. Yumd, who did not want to tell people she too was a refugee, now said that she was Lao Peng’s widowed niece-in-kw. Lao Peng and Tanni agreed to this, which was necessary because Yumei had to be given authority over the household. She was near her confinement and could not

do much heavy work.

Besides Lao Peng, there was only one man, the fiither of Pinpin, and all the rest were women and children. Tanni made Pinpin her special charge and gave her special food and forbade the boys to bully her. Pinpin had been in school when she was at home in Chmloang and asked if Tanni would not teach her lessons, but Tanni told her that all she needed to do was to get well quickly. The boys were left very much alone and sometimes would cause anxiety by running off to the city, not returning till dusk. Sometimes Tanni lost her temper with the unruly boys and found that sweet charity was not ^together the presenting of gifts to grateful hands and smiling feces.

So this group of scarred souls was thrown together by. the accidents of war — Gold Luck and his mother, l^s. Ting, the ink maker of Hsuanchang, and Pinpin and her fetheir , Ku, still hoping to find his son, and Yueh-o and her mother, Wang Taniang, and the old woman in love with her coffins and saying nothing to the outside world— each carrying within his or her breast the remembrance of a soul-searing tragedy, an unforgettable ex-perience, some sick in body and some sick in soul. It was the need of food that brought this strange group together, and there were no other ties than certain common human decencies that enabled each to get along with the others. The first-comers regarded the ktc-comers with a certain secret hostility and were by no means anxious that the group should be increased. But eventually each was content and considered himself lucky to have

stumbled into this place.

And over them all were Tanni and Yumei, refugees themselves, with personal tragedies that the other refugees did not susp^- They only knew that- they were being fed by the Peng family. And Lao Peng was happy with the little good that he was domg. He never solicited funds ftom other people and never advertised for help. His reward was the knowledge that he was doing right according to his own conscience.

There was still no news ficom Poya.

'*1 am going to write to him/* said Lao Peng.

•''He should write first," replied Tanni. 'Tit him think of me what he likes. And indeed — ^it would give me greater peace of mind not to hear firom him."

Her pale face flushed with anger, but Lao Peng could detect in her voice a tone that showed she was deeply hurt.

'Tt may be that the mails miscarried, or his relatives interfered."

"You still believe in him?"

"Ido."

Tanni looked at him sharply. "Uncle Peng, in your eyes every-
body is good. There would be no misunderstandings if every one
were like you.”

**May I write?”

"Write to him if you wish, as his ficiend. But donT mention
me,” she said proudly.

"Ifitisnotforyou then I need not write at all. I had a mind to
write a letter to scold him.”

'TPlease don*t. It would be the same as my writing to beg him
to come. . . . We are happy here as we are.” He saw her eyes
fill with tears and he obeyed her.

But one afternoon toward the beginning of February, Lao Peng
came back ftom Hankow with a letter from Poya for her, enclosed
in a sealed envelope with a letter to Lao Peng. Tanni, sitting on
the knoll, saw him alight from a rickshaw at the foot of the hilL
As he came up and saw her, he waved his hand with the letter in it
and quickened his steps.

"A letter from Poya,” he shouted in his peculiar, high, split
voice.

Her heart suddenly began to beat fast, as it had not done for

months. She ran headlong down the steps toward him, and she tripped and fell on the road, on her face. Before Lao Peng reached her she was up, and as she snatched the letter, her legs gave way again and he held her from falling again.

"The letter had miscarried,” said Lao Peng as they went up the steps. "You see, the envelope bore the address of Qumgfoo Bank instead of Qxungfoo Money Shop, and it was returned to Shanghai.”

They went up to the knolL Tannins whole body was still shaking.

"Sit here on the rock and open the letter,” Lao Peng said.
^‘Your lip is bleeding.”

She took out a handkerchief and wiped her lips, then with trembling hands tore open the letter. She left finger-prints of blood on the envelope.

The letter was dated Deceniber 9th, many weeks ago, and it said;
Younger Sisirr Leen-erh:

I know you ate angry and I bear with your fnisuiK ^firs fanHing willingly. Over the telephone I tried to explain, but you refused to listen. What had happened was strange beyond human calculation. The fact is that I was being shadowed and I avoided you to protect you. Now I will set forth what had happened as clearly as lean.

On December the third, I was invited to go to see Mr, Tung, who, as you know probably, controls the Shanghai underworld and is running down the traitors. He showed me evidences against a certain Tsui Malin, evidences that were very surprising and difficult for me to understand. There were letters and telegrams from Tientsin signed by her. He said this person was deeply involved and he wanted to get her. He said he had a report that she had been staying in my house in Peiping and wanted me to give information. I told him I did not know where she was, since she left us in Peiping. Mr. Tung seemed incredulous, and asked for a description. I described Tsui Malin as a tall girl of the northern type. I had to lie to protect you. Mr. Tung, although polite, was still incredulous, and made me wait in his house for over two hours. When finally I was sent home, I saw I was being shadowed. You know Mr. Tung has his methods. The situation xras dangerous, and I was hourly in concern for your safety. I could not betray where you were by being seen in your conqiany. This I could not pi pkin over the telephone or even in the letter that 1 sent you. 1 thought that you would surely believe me.

But I know you were angry with me because you met me with

your ftiend at the dance ball. I went there only to find her and teU her to keep your address secret. When you came ini was horrified, becatise Tung’s man was in the room watching me. What could I do but ignore you and leave the room? It was lucky that you did not come Tq> to me in the dance halL I learned that the next day the nmn went to Siangyun and questioned her. She had

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many friends and was able to prove who she was to their satis-faction, Luckily for you, also, she remained true to you and disclaimed all knowledge of Tsui Malin.

I can imagine your feeling when I did not speak to you in the dance hall. I was afraid you might do something to attract the man^s attention. The slightest mistake would have meant trouble. So I was greatly relieved when I telephoned and found you safe in your hotel the next morning. I pleaded with you to go away at once, but I did not think you heard me. Great was my relief when I telephoned again the next day and foxmd that you were gone. It was difficult for me, for I knew that I had appeared heartless. Three days have passed, and I have had no news of you. I am still expecting a telegram to tell me that you have arrived safely at Hong Kong, but perhaps you are too angry to think of doing

■^C^en you called me "^^swine” over She phone, I felt it like a

slap in my face. My heart is still burning now, not because I mind being slapped by you, as you wouldn^t mind being slapped by me, but becaxxse I knew the situation must be as hard for you to bear as it was for me.

I hope that when you receive this letter, you will be safe in Hankow with Uncle Peng. The Japanese are pushing near to Nanking, and in these troubled times, I do not know where I will be. But forgive me, whatever you have thought of me. Will you not write me now that everything is clear? My best regards to Uncle Peng. Take good care of yourself.

Your brother,

POTA

P.S. I have delayed sending this letter for two days, but' there is still no telegram from ^ou. Perhaps I must give up hope. The enemy are already at the city gates of Nanking, and J believe it is only a matter of time when the capital will fill into their hands. I don't know what I shall do.

Decmher ii.

P.P.S. Again I have delayed. No news from you. You must be really angry. Nanking has fellen.

December 13.

Tanni’s eyes filled before she had read very for, and towards the end Lao Peng saw her bite her twitching lips and heard her throat

choke. The letter lay in her hand as wet as her handkerchief when she had finished. She sat looking at the ground and burst into a loud sobbing, burying her face in her hands.

Lao Peng stayed quiet until she calmed a litde, then said gently, “What is it?”

Looking at him through her tears, she said, “You read it. He was only trying to protect me. I . . .” She could not finish.

Lao Peng took the letter and read it and handed it back to her. “Yes,” he said, “it was only a misunderstanding.”

“I hate Yumei,” she exclaimed. “He was only thinking of my safety and he thought it was I who called him ‘swine.’ ”

“You should be happy now that it is all cleared up,” said Lao Peng.

“It is all clear for me, but not for him. He has been waiting all

this time, and I diinot even write him a word. Oh, why was I so blind and foolish? I must write him a long, long letter. We must send a telegram first. To-morrow I will go down and send a telegram mys^. ”

“Your mouth is bleeding again,” Lao Peng said.

“Oh, it does not matter,” She tapped her lips with her wet handkerchief.

“I will write and tell him that you fell and cut your lips when his letter came.”

For the first time Tanni smiled. Then she asked what Poya had said in the letter to him, and Lao Peng showed it to her. The letter was dated January aoth. It was chiefly about the war and what had happened to the army, with some tales of horror fcom Nanking. Poya said that in his opinion the crisis of the war had come, and he was waiting to see whether Hiina could rally — ^that would be tibe decisive test. Ugly rumours of peace were flying thick in Shanghai. He was sick of the fashionable Qunese ladies of Shanghai, jabbering English and parading like peacocks; he was sick of his wife, sick of the feshionable doctors, sick of him-self. Malin seemed to have dropped out of his mind, except for a mention of the mistake in addressing the envelope. He did not even ask to be remembered to her.

“He will come now,” said Lao Peng.

“He didn’t say so. Do you think he will?”

“Yes, he will,” said Lao Peng confidently. “And when he comes, I suppose you will leave me and my work.”

"Oh, no. Unde Peng. I shall never leave you. I could not.”

‘TTou do not know Poya as weU as I do. He is dever, and he is interested in large things, in his grand strategy and war tactics. He will not want to bother with a few sick and poor refugees.”

"But I win make him. Unde Peng,” she cried. "I will never leave you. You gave me peace and happiness I never knew before. ... I was quite happy here.”

"Aren’t you happy now?”

"I don’t know. I suppose I ought to be, I was perfectly happy until I received this letter. Now I don’t know.”

Lao Peng said no more as they went up the slope back to the house.

Yumei saw at once the change in her, and her swollen eyes.

"Poya’s letter has come,” Tanni said briefly.

"Whkt does he write for?”

"He explains everything.”

"Don’t be a fool again, siaoehieh” said Yumei shortly.

That night after supper Tanni went early to her room and pored over the letter again under the dim oil lamp. Yumei rAtne in and found her weeping, and Tanni resented it because it made her look foolish. She began to write a reply, but her hand shook, and she had to destroy one sheet of paper after another. At last she gave up and said that she would write the next morning, and fell, sobbing, into bed.

“Now you are weeping again,” said Yumei. ''You haven’t cried once since we came here.”

"Yumei, you don’t understand. He did everything to protect me. And he thought it was I who called binn swine and spat into the telephone.”

Yumei looked a little aghast. "I will admit to him that I did it,” she said. ‘Tm not afraid of him. But I still tell you, siaocM, don’t let him come neat you unless he marries you.”

Tanni smiled and tried to e^lain about Poya being shadowed and somebody venting to find her. Yumei could not see why anybody should want to do Tanni harm, but she accepted the explanation as something beyond her undftrstaTiHing -

"What I can see is, you've lost your peace of mtfid again, siaothieb" she said with the stubbornness of an ill iterate, tnifid. "With Unde Peng, nothing can ever go wrong."

Tanni laughed at her simplicity, and also at the ftct that she

had put herself in a position where Yumei could admonish her and pity her.

The next morning she got up early and wrote a long letter to Poya. It took her almost the whole morning. She told Poya the whole story of her connection with the traitor group and of how she got away and came to his home. She confessed that she had been angry, but she swore she would never doubt him again. Poya had not used a single ardent expression of love in his whole letter, but she wrote without reserve. It was a long, passionate letter, as if she were talking to him. She took all the blame on herself, and, forgetting her pride, begged him to come to Hankow

as soon as possible, and finally she told him what they were doing. On the envelope she wrote "care of Mr. Yao Afei” and added the mark "personal.”

“If this should fell into another’s hand, I diould die of shame,” she thought.

She now felt happier and went with Lao Peng into Wuchang and to a restaurant. At lunch she took only a few mouthfuls of rice and then laid her chopsticks down.

"I can’t eat,” she said. Lao Peng saw that her eyes were swollen and her fece pale. "I must get this letter sent off first.”

He saw on her fece the look which he had seen when she first came to his house with Poya. In her liqmd eyes there was again the light of excitement and passion of a young girl in love. The change from her serene calm of a few days ago was very marked. He almost pitied her, and feared that something might happen to wound her again.

“I hate to see you so impatient,” he said. ‘1 almost wish you had not received that letter. You were quite happy.”

"Yumei said the same thing. But you ate happy for me that everjthing is cleat now, aren’t you?”

“Ofcxjurse.” He looked at her carefully. “I wish you the best

of luck. But what makes me so anxious is that you ate so delicate, so sensitive.”

“Tell me something. Unde Peng. What is it that makes you always so undisturbed?”

"How do you know that I am never disturbed?”

“You are not afraid of anything, not even of a haunted house.”

‘Tt is just a way of looking at me.”

“There is something mote than that. You have the secret of

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being happy. Is it yom: Buddhism? Why did you never rnt p lai p it to me?”

Lao Peng raised his eyes to her in a look of pleasant surprise, yet of gravity also. Slowly he said, ‘Tfou never asked me. A Buddhist does not go about prea ching . The desire for truth and salvation must come from within ihe person himself. When one is ready for it, he will be enlightened. I think you are too young to understand.”

*T am asking you now.”

"But you are in love,” he said with a smile, "and there is no hurry. Wisdom must be acquired by one’s own efforts. I have told you about the divine spark in each of us. The Sutra says, ‘A passing foolish thought makes one an ordinary man, while an enlightened thought m^es one a Buddha.’ The higher wisdom is always in us; it is inborn, and it cannot be lost, ^^ea the time comes, there is a ‘sudden’ conversion.”

"Do you mean I am not yet fit to understand Buddhism? I can understand almost anything I read.”

"That is not the point. Religion has nothing to do with learning. It is an inner experience. That is why the Sixth Patriardi said in his Discourse that it is like the drinking of water; whether it is hot or cold the drinker knows himself. Lhat higher wisdom is Prajna.''

“What is 'PrajneS'^

“It is a kind of transcendental wisdom, higher than knowledge and learning. The Buddha heart, based on intellect and com-passion, is determined by one’s religious endowment. Some never edme to see the light at all. As &e Sutra says, the passions are like an overcasting cloud screening the sim; unless it blows hard, no rays are visible.”

‘It is only these strange terms in the Sutras that I don’t under-
stand. If you wiU e^mn them, I can understand.”

Lao Peng smiled again. “Don’t be in a hurry, Tanni. I can
teach you the terms and explain what they me^* But you won’t
understand them. Some think that they can acquire wisdom by
learning the Scriptures. Others think they can acquire merit by
following the ritimls. Most monks do so. All that is foolishness.
The Six& I^triarch himself was almost illiterate, hulling rice in
a temple kitchen. It was that higher wisdom, the divine spark,
which' made him become &mous as the teacher of Wan

Buddhism. He taught the ‘sudden’ conversion* by the man
himself, doing avray with the learning of the Scriptures and rituals
and idolatry.”

“You don’t worship at the temples. Are you a Ch’an
Buddhist?”

“I don’t know myself. . . . When you first arrived, you looked
ill and troubled, because you were angry with Poya. Anger is
one of the ‘three poisons’ that becloud the Buddha-mind. Then
watching you, I saw you gradually adapt yourself, and you had
peace again. Why? Because you had forgotten your anger, bom
of the body. You were becoming interested in the works of
mercy. Now this enlightenment is the fruit of both l?mja and

"Brqna, of merit and wisdom, and merit leads to wisdom.”

“Can I marry Poya even if I become enlightened?”

“Why not? The ftee man acts according to his enlightenment.”

“Love is not a sin, is it?”

“It is part of the Karma, a man’s destiny as governed by.hk
past and present deeds.”

“But you will teadi me?” said Tanni earnestly.

Lao Peng looking at the light in her eyes said, “I will”

“Let us go now,” said Tanni, rising. “I must have my wrist-
watch repaired while we are here, too.”

“How did you break it?”

“When I fell yesterday,” Tanni said with a feint blush. “After
I got home, I discovered that my knee was bruised, too.”

“That is what Buddhism calls ‘infetuation,’ ” said Lao Peng.

She threw a quick glance at him and blushed again witji a kind
of pl<^gam ftmhaffassment , as they walked out of the restaurant.

CHAPTER XV

A FEW seconds after Lao Peng and Tanni left the restaurant, they heard the siren announcing the approach of enemy bombers. Hankow had been raided three or four times in January, and Wudiang once. The enemy bombers had so fer concentrated on the aerodromes and the ironworks. There wa:e no dug-outs and the people stayed in their houses as usual, since they did not know

where else to hide. A few people left for the country, but borobs might well fall there just as in the city streets.

^Shall we go on or turn back?” asked Tanni.

'^ust as you wish.”

'"'We must send this telegram.”

'T[hen hurry. We don't want to be caught on the river.”

It took them about ten minutes to get to the ferry, and anothet ten minutes to cross the river. Crowds of people were jostling and hurrying in the streets, making for shelter. Many stood at

doorways and on porches to watch the sky. Parents were calling their children from their play in the streets. There was tension^ every face. Murder from the air was not unknown to the natives of Hankow or to many of the refugees. This common enemy in the sky seemed suddenly to transform the city into a war front and made the people feel close to a war that was being waged hundreds of miles down the river.

Lao Peng and Tanni got into rickshaws and arrived at the telegraph office in the street back of the Bund just as a hum filled the air, like the starting of many trucks in the distance. They went inside. The drone increased swiftly, incessant, panting Uke hungry monsters bent on their prey, coming nearer and neater in an impetuous crescendo. Some people coming said that there were forty or fifty planes, in two waves. When the planes were stiU severd miles ftom the city, the sound of the whirring engines, caught by the buildings, seemed to be already over their heads. People stood hushed into a dead silence, some stuffing their ears with their fingers, waiting for the crash of bombs. The stutter of anti-aircraft guns was heard over the purr and drone of the murderous machines, almost sufibcating in its eflfect. Then ex-plosions came in quick succession, and the ground shook under their fiset. ^Wery nearl" someone shouted. Another wave followed. The infernal, incessant rhythm of engines grew steadily louder. More explosions echoed, ftrther away. Then the noise grew more fidnt and distant. Tanni felt as if a heavy load had been lifted ftom her heart.

The people rushed out and looked up at the sky and cursed the Japs with a kind of helpless rage, as people curse a thief running away.

In the telegraph office the employees were slowly returning from the basement. While waiting to send the telegram, Tanni

heard the daag of fire engines and rushed out to see them. Someone said that the Race Course had been hit and some houses had been destroyed.

The telegram "was sent in Lao Peng’s name, saying that the letter was received and Tanni was safe and they were sending their best regards. Soon the all-dear signal was given and people were coming out into the stieets.

“Would you like to see Madame Chiang? Probably she will be at the scene of the bombing,” said Lao Peng.

Tanni readily agreed. They mailed her letter and went into a shop in the neighbourhood to have her watch repaired. This done, they took taxis to the Race Course. In that direction flames shot up into the sky and ambulance cats were rushing through the streets. They stopped at a place where a huge crowd had

collected. Twenty or thirty poor houses were afire. Squads in uniform were fi ghting the flames which were gutting the houses. A great number of bombs had been dropped, but most of them had fallen on the Race Course or in the fields. Rescue squads and nurses and other girls in smart uniforms were helping to keq) order and care for the wounded. People were dragged from the collapsed buildings, some with bums, some already dead.

The charred bodies were laid together at one street comer. For the first time Tanni stood in the presence of death.

Near by some poor women were crying, sitting on the ground, while thek dead lay beside them, senseless and motionless, beyond pain and misery. In spite of herself Tanni went with laa Peng towards the place where the wounded and the homeless were being put into trucks to be taken away. There '^s great con- fusion. Some of the women had to be carried, some insisted on carrying what they had saved from the wreckage. Those whose homes were not completely destroyed went about digging and searching for thek furmture, pulling out tr unks and drawers from the charred ruins.

“There is Madame Chiang,” whispered Lao Peng.

Through an opening in the crowd, Tanni saw Madame Chiang Kaishek. She was wearing a short blue sweater and a black gown. Her sweater sleeves were rolled hi^ and she was talking busily with the gkls in uniform and dkecting

thek work with qui(^ arm gestures, her brows drawn down as she looked about this scene of suffering. The curious crowd

had come as much to see the First Lady as to watch lie fire.

Tantii stood there and watched the girls working. There was something deeply inspiring to her in the mere presence of Madame Quang, and in the sight of people helping one another, as if the perso^ tragedy of Sie victims of the bombing was ibd theit own. Individual distinctions vanished in this national catastrophe. There was beauty in disaster, something even in that scene of carnage that cheered Tanni's spirit. She wanted to talk with one of the girl workers, but they were busy, and she had nothing to say which would not sound foolish, and she contented herself with watching them gather the orphans and the homeless and put them in the tracks.

‘Tmagine Madame Chairman Quang herself looking after ns common people,” a peasant remarked with an incredulous stnil^, ‘*Hao, with such a government, who is not willing to fight?”

“Modem women are all right,” laughed another bystander.

And Tanni felt proud of modem Chinese womWiood, of which she was a part. There was in these young girls moving about in their uniforms, helping the wounded, admired by the aowd, a side of modem Chinese womanhood that she had not known before.

“If we had not come to-day, I would have missed this,” Tanni said, as they watched Madame Chiang’s car drive away.

^cn they returned to Wuchang, they learned that bombs had fidlen there and a street had been blown away, and the casualties were even higher than in Hankow. The restaurant where they had had their lunch an hour or so ago was completely destroyed, and many guests who were eating, their lunch had been killed. Tanni re^aed, with a shudder, the narrowness of their escape. If they had come later, or if they had gone on discussing Budd-hism in that restaurant for another half-hour, they might have shared the fete of those they were looki^ upon now.

Before them lay death at its ugliest. T^o bombs had hit the street. One had stmek the back of a theatre, and the concussion had destroyed four or five shop-ftonts' opposite. The fire was already under control and the survivors were allowed to come back to survey silently the wreckage that had been thek homes and to save what they could. The rescue squad was still at work, treading on the mbble and digging for people buried under the

debris. Two or three girl nurses were helping with boy scouts to carry the wounded.

Tanni saw before her a mass of dead human shapes. Women's bodies were exposed to the gaze of the spectators in fantastic postures, the dead not knowing and the wounded not caring. Here and there on the ground lay a hand or a leg without a body. On a tree near by hung a horrible unrecognizable mass of human flesh, still dripping purple blood in the sun. The dead bodies were piled up in the theatre whose back wall had been bombed out. As more dead were thrown on to the pile, she noticed that the bodies shook like the carcasses of pigs in a slaughter-house. A weeping woman was sitting on the ground and by her side lay a baby's arm blown off from its body, with chubby fingers that were fentastically beautiful. In another house a woman had her hip blown away. The shrapnel had tom off her trousers and exposed her white thighs. She lay in the majesty of her tragedy that put her above shame. Only her rags had made her look poor; now she was the equal of anyone bom of a mother. A stirring sensation sank into Tanni's consciousness. Who was this woman that someone who had never seen her should do this to her?

Lao Peng touched the woman and she cried out. She was stiU living!

Her voice, so common, so like anyone’s, shocked Tanni.

Lao Peng rushed to get a nurse. A girl came, her fingers and her gown blotched with blood.

“We must wait,” she said. “The boy scouts will soon be back with their stretchers. Those Jap devilsl”

The nurse had her hair cut short and even at the back, and she wore a ring on her finger. She had a pleasant fece, slightly bony, and her teeli showed a litde between her lips. Drop® of sweat stood out on her long, thin fece. She frowned, as if she was familiar with such carnage and yet distressed each time she saw it.

“Are you this woman’s relative?” she asked Lao Peng.

“No. But we want to help if we can.”

“Are you a nurse?” Tanni asked, since the girl was not in uniform.

The girl nodded.

“We have a little place up in Hungshan,” said Tanni. *‘We have a few refugees there. We cannot take the wounded because

we ate not doctors. But if there is one without a home, we can provide food and shelter.”

They exchanged names. The girl was called Chiuhu, oi Autumn Lake. She was working with the Chinese Red Cross and had come with the organization frcm Nanking. She talked in a low and quick Szediuen accent, by no means unpleasant, especially .when she smiled and her lotted eyes relaxed. Her frame was fragile and slim, yet her cheekbones and her month bespoke strength and endurance. Tanni, being curious and anxious to know some modern educated girls of her own genera-tion, was particularly cordial. Chiuhu was just as interested in Tanni because she could not but be attracted by her quick eyes, heavily lashed and so deep and black, and by her way of moving and dipping her lips as she stopped speaking.

* *

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When the woman had been taken away, Tanni asked, "Are yon free now? Can you come up and see our place?”

Oimbu responded with a ready smile and a freedom fiom conventional cotutesy that was characteristic of these war times.

"I am not on duty. I came out after the bombing to volunteer some help," she said.

When they returned with Chiuhu, the women and children rushed to welcome them and asked where they had been when the bombs struck. Yueh-o's mother, Mrs. Wang, said:

"The bombers came very neat, hfany people rushed out to the slope to see the fire in Wuchang. My Yueh-o was so frightened she went and lay in bed."

T anni noticed that Pinpm was not there, although every time she had come back from the dty, Pinpin had been the first to come to greet her. "How is Pinpin?" she asked.

"She ran into the wood with the others. But you had better gotoYumei. She is in her bed. She has been weeping and asking for you."

Peng and Tanni , accompanied by Chiuhu, hurried in to Yumei. She was tossing and groaning in pain. She held Tanni's hands very tightly, her free perspiring. "It has come," she said.

Tanni looked at Chiuhu, who understood at once.

"Gm you help?"

"Yes. I took a maternity course in Peiping."

"This is good fottone," said Tanni.

But there was horror in Yumei's eyes.

"If it is a devil's baby, kill iti" she said between her groans.

"Don't be so foolish," said Tanni. "I told you it would be your husband's child."

Lao Peng left the room, seeing that the shock of the bombing had probably brought on a premature birth. Tanni asked Chiuhu to sit down and told her Yumei's story. Qhiuhu shook her head. "There are many such cases," she said. She whispered to Tanni that a nun had come to her hospital and begged to have an abortion performed on her.

"Did you do it?"

"We id. She threatened to commit suicide if we did not. We women have to suffer the most. Can we not understand how it feels to have a devil's foetus inside your body?"

Chiuhu hoped that Yumei would have an easy delivery, as most

peasant women do, and asked that a basin and towels and soap and a pair of scissors be brought, and she prepared a table at one corner of the room. She wrote a note asking the hospital to have a maternity kit brought up by the messenger, and Tanni sent it by Gold Luck with the instruction to bring it back as quickly as possible.

Yumei’s pains subsided for the moment, and Tanni went over to Lao Peng’s room.

"What if it is a Japmese baby. Uncle Peng?” she said.

“One can never tell in a baby. The only sure sign would be if the baby bears a clear resemblance to her husband. Otherwise how coiild one tell? But one must never kill life. We must prevent that.”

“How?”

"By persuading her that a Japanese baby is impossible.”

‘T have told her that, and she believed me, but now she is worried again.”

“Tell her a lie. Anything is better t h an murder.”

“What he?”

Lao Peng thought for a moment. “Say that Japanese babies have hair all over the body, or anything that cannot happen in a baby.”

Tanni said, “We might tell her that Japanese babies have tails when they are bom. She will believe anything.”

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that they have twelve fingers/^

^‘No, a tail is better. But what if it turns out to be a Japanese baby?”

^^We can see about that later. Now she must have complete peace of mind. Sometimes you can hardly tell a Japanese baby from a Chinese. And what does it matter so long as she believes it is Chinese.”

'TTou mean that you would not mind raising a Japanese child?” asked Tanni, pu5:2zled.

would not,” said Lao Peng. ^'She must not kill the child. It is her own child, anyway.”

At that time, Pinpin’s brother came in to say that his sister was

asking why Tanni had not come in to see her.

So Tanni went and called Chiuhu to come with her. Yumei’s spasms of pain had ceased, and Gold Luck’s mother was there to stay with her for the moment.

They asked Chiuhu to help to allay Yumei’s fears, and Chiuhu said:

'Treaks can happen. Of course it is highly improbable, but what if she did have a baby with a taill^ I had better say that I have had experience with Japanese babies in Peiping and have seen that they come out with hair on their chests. That would not be so frightening.”

Then Tanni took her in to see Pinpin. The sick girl was lyiog in bed covered with a threadbare qmlt. Her fether stood up to receive them.

^^Sister Goddess of Mercy, I didn’t see you for the whole day,” said the ten-year-old child.

was busy. We went to Hankow, and when we came back, * I was busy with Yumei cbiehchieb. Do you know she is giving birth to a baby?”

Pinpin’s eyes brightened.

'^This is Chiuhu cbiehchieb. She is a nurse and she has come to look at you," said Tanni.

The child's fece was flushed and her thin cheeks made her eyes look darker and bigger. Chiuhu saw traces of blood in the spittoon. The light and air of the room were fer ficom ideal.. On the window-sill she saw a small glass bottle holding some flowers that the child had plucked herself. There were only two beds in the room. When Chiuhu found that Pinpio's brother had been

sharing her bed, each one sleeping at one end, she said, ''You must separate them. Ihe little brother must sleep with his fether or get another bed."

"Sister Goddess of Mercy," said Pinpin, still smiling. "Were you aftaid when the bombs dropped?"

Tanni told her what had happened and that she had seen Madame Chiang herself. At this Pinpin was very excited and she wanted to know how Madame Chiang was dressed and what she did.

When they were leaving and Pinpin had thanked them for coming, the fiither followed them outside.

“How is my daughter?” he asked the nurse.

"She has tuberculosis. She needs every possible cate and complete rest and good food. I will send some medicine and come to see her again.”

The fiither thanked her, his eyes dim and looking very helpless.

When they came back, Yumei’s pains had begun again, but Chiuhu said, with a tone of expert knowledge, ^t it Mras still early.

Tanni told Chiuhu how Piapin’s brother had to be left behind, because her fether could buy only three boat tickets for the femily of four.

"Tjisw ahr* Chiuhu said. "We had the same problem when wc were leaving Nanking. I was working with the Red Cross and I came up with the wounded soldiers. We were among the last to leave, when the Japanese were only a dozen miles from the city. The Red Cross had (harteted its own boat for the wounded. But there were over a thousand in the hospital and the boat could only hold four or five hundred. The decision had to be made, who were to go and who were to be left behind. We could only take the less severely wounded and had to leave the severely wounded to their fete. Those left behind wept like children and begged to be taken. They cried out like little children, 'Shoot usi

Give us poison! KHl us befijre you leave us, for the Japs are sure to kill us.* The nurses shed tears, and some of the doctors, too. Whose heart wouldn’t be touched? A boy about twenty rolled down from his bed and tugged at me and would not let me go, saying, ‘Good sister, save me, save ray life!* He had a deep wound in the abdomen, and I knew he could not survive even the trip to the wharf. I told him that I would come back for him, knowing

that he would certainly die. When I came back, he was almost dead, still lying on the floor with blood coming out of his mouth. He opened his eyes, looked at me strangely, and then died. Rice hay lay all over the place. By the time we left, the hospital was lilrp. a pigsty, with Ae wounded who were left behind howling horribly. It was like committing murder on those wounded soldiers, and I did not have a heart of stone. AU day and all night we carried the wounded to th^ boat. There were only two cars, and we had to carry them on stretchers ourselves. From the hospital to the wharf took over half an hour by car, but on foot it took us the greater part of a day, and four of us could carry only one man at a time, and some of them were terribly heavy.”

“You women nurses carried the stretchers?”

‘TTes, but there were men, too, and all had to help. It is '

indescribable, unimaginable. In the streets the people were flurried and ^aid of the bombers in the air. But we could not stop for them if we wanted to reach the wharf at all. My shoe heels were torn off and I could not get a new pair because the shops were closed. You could not even get a cup of tea, for the restaurants were closed, too. I dare not look back upon those days."

"How many did you save?"

"About five hundred. The doctor. Dr. Robert Lim, was among the last to come aboard. He was driving the ambulance himseft. fi»>, the voyage was the worst part of There was no room to sit or lie down. We nurses and doctors had to stand up on deck for four days. There was no food until we reached Wuhu. A few who had brought some bread shared it with us. And there was no drinking water. Some of us tied a string to a cigarette tin to bring up water ftom the rivet for the wounded, h^y died on the voyage, and their bodies were just thrown into the river. When we arrived at Hankow, my legs were weak and yet strangely stiff, and I could hardly drag myself along. . . . Those thmgs are better not spoken or thought about. It was like a nightmare."

Chiuhu's tone was quiet and unemotional; she smoked a cigarette as she told her story in her low, quick accent, without any heroics. All this was new to Tanni, who had had little contact with modem educated women.

“But after aU,” Qhiuhu concluded, “we are still living. None

of those left behind survived. Any able-bodied man with calluses on his hands was killed, whether or not he was a soldier.

When Gold Luck returned with the maternity kit, Ghiuhu lit the alcohol lamp and ordered boiling water and asked for clean cloths and newspapers. Mrs. Ting, mother of Gold Luck, came and stood at the door with Wang Tanitmg, the mother of Yuch-o, who said she had delivered many babies. Tanni, who had never seen a baby delivered, felt helpless.

Yumei’s pains came and went, but still there was no sign of the baby. Yumei tried to suppress her groans as ail women do out of a sense of shame, but occasionally she burst into a scream that seemed all the more terrible because it was checked. The sheet brutality of it horrified Tanni.

A stove was ordered to keep the room warns, and when it was dark a lamp was lighted.

Yumei’s body was heaving and turning as if on a rack. Qiiuhu was standing by.

"Ask the doctor to take it out," Yumei moaned. "And if it is a Japanese baby, kill it."

'Tt is your husband's baby," said Tanni, grieving for her.

"Then why this torture? I can stand it no more."

"It will come soon. Be patient. It is your child and your husband's child."

"How do I know?" moaned Yumei feebly.

"I will tell you," said Chiiahu, "In the hospital in Peiping, I have seen many Japanese babies bom. They come out with hair on their chests. So if it is a good, clean baby, with no hair on its chest, you will know for certain that it is a Chinese baby."

But Yumei did not seem to hear. She tossed and rolled and her arms clutched at Chiuhu. "Doctor, save me. I don't want the baby."

"Don't talk nonsense," said Wang Tamang. "AU women have to go through this."

Hour after hour they sat, as the dock ticked away on the table. The baby's hips were visible, but they stayed locked. Chiuhu felt the mother's pulse and found it strong.

Towards midnight she dedded that she must hdp the baby to come out. By sheer fiorce she moved it into a better position and pulled it out after twenty minutes. When it was done, she was perspiring all over. The mother sank into a quiet sleep. Wang

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Temiofig w&s gteady impressed when she learned that Qiiuhu ■was an unmarried girl, and ■went a'way shaking her head.

When Yumei ■woke &om her sleep, Tanni bent over her and said:

‘Tt is a boy, your son and your husband’s son. There is no hair on its chest.”

Yumei looked do^wn at the baby lying beside her and Rfnil<»d a sweet peaceful smile.

Chiuhu slept that night in the big mahogany bed ■with Tanni. Tanni had been as mudb impressed by Qiiidiu’s skill and courage as by the physical process of parturition. She thought of the brutal bombing scene of the morning. That day she had seen both and bir&. She knew now what Kama meant.

Lao Peng had bought for Tanni a few Buddhist sutras of the Ch’an School; the ’Lankavatra Sutra, the Discourse of the Sixth Katriarcb and the Song of Enlightenment. The Ufe of lie Sirth Patriarch at the beginniag greatly interested her. Lao Peng did not want to start her too quickly, and he made her recite ■verses from the Song of Enlightenment and tihe Dbyana for Be^nners.

What shall we be rid of if we want peace and happiness? What shad we do to be rid of sorrow? What is the poison that devours all our thoughts?

J^ll hatred and thou shcdt have peace and happiness. Kill haired and, thou shalt have no more sorrow. It is hatred that devours joar Qiodness. . . .

The sufferings of birth and death are due to thy sensual desires and lusts. When these tk) children are gyown th^ become tby enemies emd all thy laborious work has been in vain, and effter a last breath is dram thou art bstried in the ^ave.

How f<^ is thy dead bo^; bow putrid is a dead corpsel Its nine cavities yield sth&ng fluids, but thou, O fool, clingest to if as does a m aggp t to excrement.

However, thou who art wisest, realkffmg the bodfs emptiness and transience, will not be enslaved by the allurements of its desires, but rising free from their fascinations will find tly true Nirvana.

Tanni, repeating these, found them easy to understand, but Lao

Peng tefosed to teach hex further. He prescribed a carious regimen for her. Salvation of the soul had to come from the training of her body.

"Go and take walks up the hills and down the vaUey. Walk until your legs ate tired. Forget this household. Go up to the Big Temple behmd or walk in die outskirts of Hankow, Hanyang, and Wuchang. When you are in Hankow, think of the people in Wuchang, and when you ate in Wuchang, th ink of the people in Hankow. It is only when your body is free that your soul can be free. When you can wai all the way from the Tortoise Hill in Hanyang back across the river to the Snake Hill in Wuchang and not feel too tired, then I shall teach you mote."

Tanni was not much interested in walking, and she usually returned after going a few miles. But Lao Peng had taught her another thing: to go out and sit on the knoll in the morning and at dusk and on moonlight nights. This she found easier to do. She often sat and watted the hills and rivers and the sailing clouds and the cities in the valley below. Sitting there at twilight, with the peaceful valley at her feet and the crowded cities

enveloped in the light of the darkening day, cleansed her mind. Often thoughts of Poya would come back to her, and she thought of life and death, and of Yumei and her baby, and of all her own past life, until sometimes she thought that she was living in a dream. Lao Peng had told her just to sit there and let her mind wander where it pleased. The Yangtse River flowed eternally to the east. The Yellow Stork Tower stood over a bank a thousand years old. The sun that was sinking in the west was the same sun that had sunk yesterday. Sometimes it seemed strange to her that there should be so much suffering and sorrow upon this beautiful eternal earth. Human beings were in feet very sr^ in comparison with the eternal earth. She saw the trains whistling and blowing white pufis of smoke in the distance. If it was a bright day, she could see hundreds of people, no bigger than insects — a curious kind of insects walking on two legs — hundreds of them alighting from the trains and disappearing into the city that looked like a chatted honeycomb.

As the days went by, there was no word from Poya. She became more concerned and at the same time she was resigned. “Where there is craving, there is pain; cease from craving and you are blessed,” Lao Peng had said, quoting the Sutra.

Outwardly she was busy. Yumei’s baby was growing rapidly,

although it was very ill-tempered and cried a great deal, and its cries at night disturbed Tanni’s sleep. Qiiuhu came to see her every few days, and sometimes Tanni went to visit at the hospital, where she met a few of Chiuhu’s girl ftiends.

Somehow the news had spread among the refugees in the house that Yumei’s baby was Japanese. One some of the boys rarnff

into Yumei’s room.

"We want to see the Japanese baby,” one of the boys said ,

Yumei held the baby, crying at her breast.

‘'It is a Chinese baby,” she shouted. “You get outl”

The boys ran out, but the baby went on crying. Yumei was irritated, for it cried a great deal without reason.

She spoke to it helplessly. “I have fed you six or seven timw to-day and you are stiU crying. What kind of a monstrous djild are you, sent to torture your mother?” Every time he cried, she fed him at her breast. This quieted him for a moment and then he started crying again. This baby was dark and swarthy. Yumei had looked at every part of his fece, his eyes, his ears, his to see if there was any trace of resemblance to her husband. But in the second week there was less resemblance than she had thought she saw at first. The baby seemed uglier and darker and

it began to show squint eyes. Her husband had had no squint eyes, not had her husband’s fether. Was that Japanese soldier squint-eyed? She could not remember. Perhaps she was nursing a Japanese baby after all. She finally brought herself to believe that the Japanese had certainly had squint eyes. Sometimes while she was nursing the child at her breast, this ugly doubt would rise in her mind, and she would suddenly pull her breast away, and the duld, unsatisfied, would cry still more.

One day a woman who had come from the village to sell firewood, asked to see the new baby.

“How old is it?” she asked.

“Fourteen days,” Yumei replied.

"It has grown very fast.”

“Yes, he has, but he is very ill-tempered and he cries all the time. I can’t have even a night’s sleep.”

“After all, a Japanese baby is different from outs,” said the woman solemnly.

Yumei’s free grew hot.

“What are you saying?” she asked angrily.

The woman realized that she had made an impolite remark and hastily apologized. “I only heard people say in the village that you had a Japanese baby and I thought I would drop in to see him. We have never had a chance to see a Japanese. Now I am busy and I must return.”

Yumei stared as the woman went out of the room. The baby was still crying.

“Let him cry. The devUl” she exclaimed, as Tanni came in.

“He is hungry. Why don’t you feed him?”

“I boot fed him. I don’t know what to do with him. Let him dry •

Yumei’s eyes filled and she took him up and loosened her button an(Lput her breast to the baby^s mouth. But when she looked down at him the squint seemed worse than before. She shivered and put the baby away.

“It is an East-Ocean devil, I knowl” she said. “How am I to nurse a devil’s baby at my breast? He will only grow up to

torture his mother.”

“But he is hungry and you must feed him.”

“Let him go hungry. I have had enough with him. I don’t care if he starves to death. Everybody in the village is saying that he is a Japanese baby.”

Thus she refused to feed her baby any more, and it cried itself to sleep and then woke up fitom hunger and cried again.

“You are killing your own chUdl” said Tanni.

’•Let anyone feed him who cares. It is not my husband’s baby. It is the devil’s seed.”

Lao Feng was called and he said angrily, “You are murdering your baby.”

“I will murder him. ... Or you can take him away. He is a squint-eyed devil, like all the squint-eyed devils. Give him to anybody who wants him. 1 am not going to drag through life with this shame. I am better off without him . I had better kill him or he wiU grow up to kill me.”

“Give him to me, then,” said Lao Peng.

“You are welcome to him. He will grow up to kill you.”

Yumei sank back upon her bed and wept bitterly. Seeing the pitiful child, Tanni took him up and carried him to^Lao Peng’s room.

Lao Peng ofiFered him to any one of the women refugees who would nittse him, but none would touch him. There was no milk obtainable on the mountain, and Lao Feng had to send for condensed milk. He had never had to nurse a baby before, and Taom had to help him.

“Perhaps it is a Japanese baby,” whispered Tanni. 'It « an ugly child. Yumei says that the Japanese soldier was squint-eyed.”

“What if it is? We must not commit murder.”

And so the baby was kept in Lao Peng’s room and Tanni spent much of her time there with it. But die situation became impossible. Wang Tamang said that perhaps the baby had indigestion, but she would not come and help, and the baby had to be left very much alone.

One evenmg, Tanni came in and found the baby dead in its

bed. The bed quilt was wrapped tightly around it. She listened and there was no breath; the child had been smothered to dpath .

Horrified, she went to Yumei’s room and found her weeping in her bed. She looked up guiltily.

“You have done itl” said Tanni.

“Yes, I have done it!” Yumei said grimly. “The sooner his young life was ended, the better for me. The shame 1^ followed me here. I am already being laughed at by the people. But you don’t have to tell about it. Just say the baby died.” '

When Lao Peng returned, he found the dead child in his room and Tanni told bm what had happened. His fece flushed with anger, and he said, “Poor little creature! So ends his life, as the result of his fether’s sins. One bad deed leads to another. How could she be so sure it was not her husband’s child?”

Tanni thought he was going in to s(x>ld Yumei, but he did not He only said, “What is done cannot be undone! I hate this cruelty of her heart.”

Now that the infant was dead, she looked at its litde face and tiny hands and feet and though^ it pitiful, and she was not afiaid, for the baby appeared so peacefully asleep, and she touched its little hand and her tears droppecL Her eyes met Lao Peng’s over the body of the dead child. His face was full of sorrow, and the

lines on his fordtead were deepened.

"We must Imq^ this secret for Yumei," she said. "The neighbours had come to say it was a Japanese baby, and she wanted to be rid of the shame."

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So when Lao Pe^ went over to see Yumei, he merely said.
"It was the baby*s sins. But your heart is hard, for it is your own child, after aU."

When the people heard the news, some of the women came to look' at the baby, and all said it was pitiful, but it was also t^ ficuit of sin, and the duld could not have been expected to live anyway. Since it was a small infant, it was hastily buried tliat night. Yumei would not even go to see the burial.

When the burial was finished, Tanni returned with Lao Peng to his room. The oil lamp was burning low on his desk.

*'Well," he said, with a sigh, "if it was a Japanese child, you see how one bad deed leads naturally to another. The fether's sins are visited upon the innocent child. That is the law of the

"KarmaP

“Will you explain to me now more of your Buddhisns? How is one to reach enlightenment?” said Tanni .

Lao Peng looked at her steadily and said, ‘‘There has been some hard blowing of winds, and 1 think clouds have been swept away from your mind. I think you can understand now. You have seen that child bom and seen it die. You may think lhat he Is to be pitied, because he was short-lived while we espect a longer Life. But that is a mistake. 'What is a longer life compared to the universe? We ate all bom into this lifo, but we never see life dearly.”

He went on to tell her that the basis of enlightenment was to see life clearly. But to see it dearly, one had to get rid of the notion of self, the foolish distinction between sen and others, between and mt. This enlightenment makes possible our emandpadon ftom aU sorrows and evil passions. For we are living in a world of phenomena, which is an illusion created by the senses and our i^te intelligence. Only in this world does the distinedon between individt^ty and generality exist. From this stupid illusion arise all human passions, avadee, anger, and iofotuadons, and hence hatred and struggle, illusory joys and dis-appointments. Only the wise one, with ms superior endowments, sees that such diednedons are foUy. For the world of phenomena, where one is bom and gives birm to others and dies, is only an illusion. Only the Mind-essence, without distinedon between self

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and others, between the myriad creatures and the universal sd^ is real. The Diamond Sutra says that if the Buddha entertained for a t urtmftfit the notion of self and of other selves and of the living beings and the universal self, he would cease to be Buddha. But being bom in the flesh, we ding stupidly to these arbitrary distinctions. To free oneself from these sensory discriminations of you and me, of individuality and generality, is to return to the higher intelligence of the Buddha. And from this spring a cosmic pity and a spirit of selfless charity. “He should practise charity by giving, not objective gifts alone, but the selfless gifts of kindness and sympathy.” Being free from such illusions of self, one is emandpated from all the sorrows and pains that arise from the ego, and enters die region beyond being and non-being, and can enjoy the bliss of Buddha sitting on the “Great Lotus Throne.”

Tanni then told Lao Peng about her dream of the whed, and asked him what it meant. For answer, he opened the LankMatra Sutra, and read her the following text:

The vijnana {consciousness) is orignated by igmrance, deed and desire, and keeps its function by grasping objects ly means of the sense-organ^, such as the ye, etc., and ly clingng to them as real; while a world of objects and boSes is manifested owing to the discrimination that takes

place in the world of mind itself, reason of the habit-energy (sichi) stored up by false imagnation since begnningless time, this world (Vishaya) is subject to change and destruction from moment to moment; it is like a river, a seed, a lamp, wind, a closed; like a monky who is abvtys restless, like a fly who is ever in search of unclean things aid defiled places, Uke a fire which hums without stop. Again, it is Ske a water-drawing wheel or a machine, it goes on roUing the wheel of trans-migration, carrying varieties of bodies and forms, resuscitating the dead Uke the demon Vetala, causing the wooden figtres to move as if a magUah moved them. Mahamati, a thorough stnderstanding concerning these phenomena is called comprehending the selflessness of persons.

'"You see now," said Lao Peng, "why Buddhism can be under-stood only by the higher wisdom, and why it is so diflficult foi the ordinuy man to free himself of the errors of the sense dis-tinctions. All that is bom perishes; only the mind cannot perish because it is beyond the cycle of birth and death, beyond the realn if being and non-being."

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"Then is all life empty?" _

"Emptiness is a ■word. It is empty only in the sense of being non-substantial. But substantiality also is only a word, one of the

notions due to out habit-energy. People misunderstand Nirvana as emptiness or estinction. It is only the ceasiog of the indi-"viduality. We ate li'ving in a finite, conditional world, and we cannot imagine the absolute, the unconditional. That is why we say it is ‘empty.’ ”

But Tanni was more interested in the doctrine of the Karnta, the law of causality of present life, and particularly in “sin,” or Karma-idaikaaces {niebebof^.

“But being bom, how should we live? Is it wrong to go on li'ving and to marry and give birth?”

“Marriage and love are a part of the law of Karmt. Having bodies, we also have loves and desires, and loves and desires bring their o'wn disappointments. Living in the world of Karaa, we are subject to the laws of Kama, of sin and retribution ficom which there is no escape. The law of causality is everywhere. As we sow, so do we reap. We must go on living, and by our very living, we determine our future, approaching -wisdom or sinking lower into the abyss of sorrow. Our present life ties us down to loves and hatreds, for love and hatred are reverse sides of the same medaL You told me that you hated Poya; that -was because you loved him, as now you know you love him. We all have fiiends and relatives and personal attachments of one sort or another. To be completely fi:ee from the desires of the senses is impossible. But to Imow that such loves and hatreds are caused by our senses and by the distinctions ofjou and me, is to attain

to the blessed state of love for aU beings, secure above the sorrows
of individual disappointments.”

Then he taught her the praise of Buddha in the Laakavofm
Scriptwre:

As tbou rarest the world with thy perfect intelU^nce and compassion,
it must seem to tbee like an ethereal fimer of wbicb one cannot say: it is
bom, it is destrtyed, for the terms being and now-being do not apply to it.

As thou reviewest the world with thy pefect intelligence and compassion,
it must seem to thee like a dream of which it cannot be said: it is permanent
or it is destructible, for being and non-beir^ do not epply to it.

As tbou reviewest all things by t^ perfect mfeltigynce and compassion,

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thg must seem to tbee like visions beyond the reach of the bumem mi,
as being and non-being do not apply to them.

With tly perfect intelligence and compassion which are b^oni aB
limit, thou con^ebendest the egolessness of things and persons, and art
free and clear from the hindrances of passion and learning and egnsm.

Thou dost not vamsh into Nirvana, nor does Nirvana abiik in thee

for Nirvana transcends all dsudity of knowing and known, of beit^ ad nothbeing.

Those who see tbee thus, serene and b^ond conception, will be emanci-pated from attachment, will be cleansed of all defilement, both in world and in the spiritml world byond.

In this world whose nature is like a dream, there is place for prase and place for blame. But in the ultimate Beality cf Dharmakcya IjOw) which is far b^ond the senses and the discriminating mind, what is there to praise or blamS 0 thou most wisel

CHAPTER XVI

The Buddha Merciful must haye wished to make it especially hatd for Tanni. She had received the loog-delayed letter feom Poya on the third of February, and she had sent both a telegram and a letter of e^lahation, but no reply had come. Tantii bad thought her love for Poya was dead, but it was now reawakened and her mind was restless.

After the nervous strain of Yumei’s confinement, and then the care of the baby and its death, she was relieved of physical duties . and het time was free. But idleness is bad for a troubled mind, i Lao Peng saw that she grew thinner and paler. He prescribed walking exercise, as much'for common-sense reasons of hygiene, as for &e deeper truth that spiritual emancipation fiom worldly

sorrow must come through physical emancipation from the dependence on creature cohorts. A soul to be saved had to he put thror^h rirorous training, like a cadet in a camp. And as the cadet in training in his reSective moments looks curiously at normal civilian life, so the objects of this world, and of city life, change their proportions and meaning to a hermit^ living in the mountains. A carefiee soul can dw^ only in a car^ee body

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which often goes under the name of asceticism. As the Son£ of Bnli^tenment says:

Walking ly himself in solitude.

The prfect one saunters along

The oneandmiversal ^sage of Nirvana

With elevated air and a calm spirit.

His features gaunt and his bones firm.

He goes bis wty alone.

Asceticism is harder for a woman than for a man, especially

when she has conceived. When the spirit wishes to suppress the body, it counteracts and negates the very laws of the woman's being. The life force within the mother's womb, strong and hungry for growth and nourishment, is insistent in its demands and refuses to be denied, obeying laws as old as life itself. That demand is transferred to the mother's body and transforms her tastes, her appetites, her moods and feelings. The embryo decides what the mother ought or ought not to do. The embryo demands above all peace and rest. When these laws are violated, the embryo sdll takes what it can firom the mother and draws to itself all the sustenance there is in the body regardless of the mother.

The study of Buddhist Scriptures Im changed only Tanni's outlook on life. She was unaware that besides her own soul's stirrings, another soul, within her, had also awakened to life.

One morning she went out for a short walk. As she passed beyond the Burners' huts and was ^ing u^ the steep hiu-path toward the Big Temple, she felt suddenly feint and collapsed on the road. Nobody had seen her. When she came to, she tried to sit up. A woodcutter passed and saw her sitting on the ground, her fece and lips white, and he knew that she was ill and helped her back to the house.

She went into her own room and lay on the bed, while Yumei went to call Ijaa Peng.

Lao Peng came and sat on Tanni's bed; his Bice was tender with

concern.

’T was walking up the hill and suddenly 1 felt dizzy,” she said. “When I came to, a wcxxicutter helped me home.”

He looked at her in silence for a minute, thinking thoughts that could not be spoken. At last, he said: “You must not go out by yourself any more, Tanni. And you must not tire yourself.”

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She buried her fece in her hands. Yumei came and stood over the bed and said: “Perhaps siaoebieb has happiness in her body.”

At this Tanni turned her &ce toward the wali and wept until hei shoulders shook.

Iao Peng left without a word, looking deeply worried, and went and shut himselfup in his own room. . . .

Two nights later, Tanni came and knocked at Lao Peng’s door. When he opened the door, she walked in with her head bent. An oil lamp stood on the bamboo table. Outside the window the winds rustled the leaves. She seated herself on his bed, since there was only one diair.

“What are you going to do?” he asked.

She looked up at mm, her eyes glistening. Her look was straightforward, but she did not answer.

“I think you should not worry. A letter may come ftom Poya soon.”

“It is almost three weeks now, and there is not a word ftom him.”

“He win write, I know, and he will come to you,” said Lao Peng steadily.

“If he does not, I shall go to Ghiuhu,” she said.

His look of horror showed that he knew what she meant.

^*Yes,” she continued, “with all your Buddhism, you cannot understand. A man can never understand. The burden of the flesh is carried by woman. Chiuhu has done it for other women, she told me, and she can do it for me.”

‘Twill write again to Poya. He will come.”

“But if he doesn’t?”

"You must not destroy life. I will not allow it,” said Lao Peng,

in visible torment.

“A child without a father’s name!” she said bitterly. “Yes, it is all very interesting, this law of Kar/na: ‘The sins of tihe fether arc visited upon his offspring.’ I bear my mother’s name, and my child will bear my name, and if it is a girl her child also shall be a Tsui — a dynasty of the Tsuisl”

Lao Peng rose and paced the floor. “There is surely some way out. News of Poya will come yet.”

“He has not written to me since last December. It is almost three months now.”

He stopped and his eyes looked searchingly at her, and he said:

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"The rhiltT must be bom, and it must have a name. There is a way out,’*

"What way is there?”

"Tanni — if no news comes ftom Poya — will you object if the child bears the name — of Peng?”

His voice feltered toward the end. She looked at him as if dazed by a new vista of thought too great for her to grasp.

"Are you offering this to me — as a sacrifice?”

" Tanni, perhaps I should not have said it. ... I am offering you only a name for the child. I dare not ask you to love me.”

"Ate you offering to marry me — ^to protect me from shame?”

“No. I am too old for you, but I am not too old to — ^to appreciate and value you — have no right to say this ”

He stopped. He saw a conflict of emotions on her fece, gratitude, and adoration, and unconcealed embarrassment.

*‘You must understand,” he said. “We must wait for Poya. You love him, and it is his child. But if he does not come, if he changes his mind ...”

Slowly she raised her head to him and nodded. He grasped her hand.

“You will then?”

"Yes, I will.”

But as he pressed her hand, she knew it was to him more than

sacrifice.

Abruptly she withdrew her hand and left the room.

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In Poya’s mind Tanni ’s words over the telephone before her departure had left no doubt that she had completely misunderstood him. “I was your kept woman. Now 1 am a kept wonmn no more, not for you, nor for anybody. . . . Enjoy yourself with Siangyun. She wants you.” The feet that she had, as he thought^ railed him “swine,” did not make him angry; it only showed how desperate and how much in love with him she was.

"I cannot blame her,” he said to himself.

Quite confident of her love for him, he told his unde, Afei, of the misunderstanding, and said: "She called me a swine,” and laughed as he told it.

But when days passed without word fi:om her, and Nanking frit, he sank into a deep mood of depression, his personal troubles

colouring in his mind the national tragedy. The fell of lie national capital was no surprise to him, but its defence in the last days was execrable. When Wuhu, seventy miles up the rivet, was captured three days before the fell of Nanking, the retreat of the Oiine se army up the southern bank of the river was cut off. Ihe hundred thousand soldiers left to defend Nanking were trapped in a triar^le with Nanking at the apex, at the bend of the Yangtse, bounded by the rivet on the north and the pursuing enemy on the south.

The defence of the capital was entrusted to General Tang Shengdhi who volunteered to undertake the impossible against the advice of General Pai Tsunghsi. Since the breaking of the Qiinese line at Soochow, the Qiinese retreat had become a rout. The defence forces consisted of three different armies, the Kvmngsi troops, the Cantonese troops and the Szechuen troops, and some centrd mechanized units, which, however, were kept withm the city. Individual heroism could not avail in the absence of competent staff command. A whole Cantonese battalion guarding a hill in the eastern approaches to the capital, and caught between enemy fires, fought to the last man. The bat^dn was hterally burned to death, wiSi the whole hill in flames. When other troops withdrew to the city to take up positions for street fighting, they found that General Tang had gone away without leaving orders for the defence. The army collapsed like a body without a head. The Kwangsi forces were able to mainrain themselves as a unit and they struck west to escape. Some

soldiers discarded theix arms and uniforms and sought refuge iu the international safety zone, or crossed the river with the fleeing civilians, by ferry, junk, and every otiher conceivable means of keeping afloat. There was no organized transport system across the rivet, but any system wouH have broken down with a hundred thousand peopde, fleeing for their lives, waiting on the bank for a few hundred junks to take them across. The gates neat Siakwan were jammed with stalled trucks and broken cars, and the trampled stinking corpses of men and women piled higher andi higher, blocking all tramc. Those who succeeded in getting across blessed their luck.

For Poya, broodic^ over the news of the Nanking debacle, the supreme hour of China’s trial had come. Three or four hunted thousand troops had been sacrificed on the Shanghai battlefklds

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including sevetal divisions of the Central Army. The provincial troops sent up to stem the tide were unequal to the task. The line around Soo^ow crumbled when a dozen Japanese soldiers, disguising themselves in raincoats on a rainy evening, simply knocked at the gates of the city and were readily admitted by the sentries, who were from the North-east and whose discipline was deplorable. Such troops made any defence impossible. The line broke like a chain at its weakest linir.

The Japanese victory parade through the International Setfle-
ment of Shanghai incensed Poya, as it did the Chinese public.
Could the Chmese morale stand ^s staggering blow? Was the
Chinese Army able to recover and re-form its line further inland?

Poya's paper tactics and grand strategy began to go awry. All
human odds were against China. If she sued for peace, all was
over and China would perish as an independent, sovereign nation.
But Poya miscalculated, as the Japanese High Command did. If
the Japanese Arm^ could push up to Hai^ow in hot pursuit,
China's chances of recovery would be very small. But the
Japanese Army collapsed more disgtacefiiEy as victors than the
Q^ese Army collapsed as the vanquished. It debauched itself in
a way that incapacitated it for further advance, and drew fiom the
Commander-in-Chief of Japanese forces, Iwane Matsui, the
remark: Japanese army is the most undisciplined am^ in

the world." A Japanese spokesman was saying in Tokyo that the
war was fer feom over, but the Japanese army felled to follow its
advantage up to Hankow, which would have been relatively easy
at the time. Marching up the banks of the Yangtse would be a
matter of three or four weeks, and real mechanized units, in
German blitzkrieg style, could take Hankow in a fortnight. The
actual condition of &e Japanese army made any such plan im-
possible, even if the officers had order^ it. This military mistake,
which no known force could prevent, gave China the chance to
recover feom the shock and re-form her armies, so that in April,

four months later, China was able to deliver foe first crushing defeat on the enemy at Taierchuang. This spelled the difference between victory and defeat for the entire war.

After Poya had sent his letter to Tanni, he waited for her reply quite confidently. But when he heard nothing, remome and regret entered Im Peihaps she would never believe his

e^ianadon. After consulting his unde, Afei, he made up his

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mitifl to wait xmtil the whole story of her connection with the traitors was satisfactorily cleared up. He still loved her, but he could not think of marrying her unless that point was completely explained. Therefore when his letter was returned because of the incorrect address, he merely wrote to Lao Peng, and enclosed the original letter in its sealed envelope, without adding letter or even sending her his love.

Thus during almost two whole months Poya had not hpqtj ftom Tanni, or fcom Lao Peng. Was Lao Peng too angry with him because of Tanni? What were the two doing together? Tliey had left Peiping together, had journeyed togetoer to Shanghai, and now she had gone to Hankow to ^d him. He felt a Wind of envy for his ftiend, and sometimes a wicked thought would rise m

him^ it would be amusing if his old friend was enamoured of Tanni, like himself. He himself could not believe in platonic friendship. If Lao Peng did not yield to her physical charms, he might succumb to her affectionate Mrays or her devotion to him and to his work. It was a simple, smooth romance, if romance it was. She had never doubted Lao Peng, and they had never tired of each other. He was sure that Lao Peng would tbinW her innocent, for Lao Peng was incapable of thinking ill of anybody. But he was sure Tanni would not love Lao Peng on account of his age.

In his perplexity he sought distraction in the company of Siangyun. Her direct worldly view amused him, and she did not ask for much. She would look at him with a cool-headed dis-belief in her own hold upon him and she never acted as if she thought he had feUen in love with her. She had the charm of women of the old type, down to her bedroom technique and old coquetry; her combioation of sensualism and a suppressed but everpresent sense of modesty gave her a special charm. She merdy followed the ancient techmque of love-making, calling him “ta-td’ and using other amorous expressions that were found only in old story books. Nor did he treat her as he had treated Tanni. He did not bring her expensive presents. One day when he gave her a hundred dollars she thanked him in a way that was al^st humiliating. Both sides considered it a good bargain, and Poya felt rather relieved that everything was so simple. She sometimes mentioned Tanni, and once she said that in her opinion Tanni and Lao Peng, whom she had never seen, were

certainly living together, for she could not conceive otherwise.

‘^ou shut up!” Poya said angrily.

“But why did she go to him at Hankow if she didn’t love him?”

“But you don’t know Lao Peng. He is my friend.”

“I have never yet seen a man who could resist a woman,” she said. “Not even a monk.”

Siangyun had a fund of droll stories making fun of the monks, over which she laughed as she told them. They always played upon the theme of the reputed sainthood of men or women, especially of the Taoist immortals and sainted widows, and always ended with a shattering climax.

One story she told was of a young widowed daughter-in-law newly bereaved. The mother-in-law had received a decoration from the Emperor for her chaste widowhood, and the young daughter-in-law asked her how she had done it. The mother-in-law showed her a bag of copper coins, worn very smooth and bright. “How is this?” asked the daughter-in-law. “Well,” said

the old widow, “when your father-in-law died, I could not sleep at night. In order to keep my mind pure, I took this bag of coins and blew out the light and threw them on the floor. I had to grope for them on the floor in the dark, and there were a hundred of them. By the time the seardh was over, I was so tired and sleepy that I went to bed and fell asleep. I did Axis every night during my young years for ten years. That was how I kept my chastity.”

Another story was about a sainted abbot of exemplary character. After a long life of devotion he lay on his death-bed. His monastic brothers asked if he had a dying wish. “I have lived a strictly religious life all these years,” he said, “and I have never seen a woman naked. This is my only regret. If I could see a woman’s body, I should die content.” They marvelled still more at his holy life. “Your Holiness’s wish shall be fulfilled,” replied the brothers. “We shall bring a woman stripped before you, for you to look at so that your soul may depart from this earthly life in peace.” So they brought a prostitute from the town and stripped all her clothes from her and placed her for the abbot to look at. The abbot gazed intently at her parted thighs and finally said with great disappointment in his voice: “After all, she l^n’t got anything that the nuns haven’t got. They are aU just alike.”

Sometimes Poya thought of the story of Ananda and Pdiiti and Manjusri that he had read in the Buddhist Scripture in Lao Peng’s

house in Peiping, and it seemed to him that he was Ananda, Tanoi was like the piostitute’s daughter Fchiti, and his hriend Lao Peng was like Manjusti who broke the spell of Ananda’s love.

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Lola and her relatives arrived in Shanghai about the middle of January, since Granduncle Feng was sure the war was over there. Poya questioned Lola about Tsui Malin. She had never heard of the seized documents and she neither defended her nor added anything. The consensus of opinion seemed to be against Malin, and Poya kept his thoughts of her to himself. ''Whatever it is,” he said to himself, “I have killed her love for me ^eady.”

Kainan was greatly pleased when she saw that &ete was an outward change in her husband and when he told her that there was no woman now. She found Shanghai fesdnating, because she had come to know a few society ladies, and regarded it as a great honour to know the feshiooable lBi4;lish-speaking wives and daughters ofbankers and department store managers. The trivial chatter of these ladies, their preoccupation with &emselves, their unconcern about the war, and their shocking ignorance of Chinese life, surprised and annoyed Poya. Some of them had never heard of Chinese cultural or political leaders whose names did not

appear in the English papers. They were shut up in an encased and comfortable world which was nearer to Hollywood or New York than it was to Nanking. It was a world sufficient unto itself, modem and prosperous and lively with its French restaurants and its ak-cooled theatres, its private cars and its country clubs.

After a few unsuccessM attempts to introduce her husband to this world, Kainan gave up, and she went her way and he went his. He WAS letting a w^-trimmed moustache grow, like his father in the photograph, and he was busy with his men feiends. He often brought home maps and large thick volumes and was immersed in ffiem at night. Soon he l^gan to speak of preparations ft>r a journey to die interior.

“Is it somebody in Hankow you ate ^hinking of?” Kainan asked.

“Don’t be foolish,” he said. “I am making a great journey fei inland.”

He was going with an engineer named Ghiti, whom he had met atone of Kainan’s patties. He had known Chin at college but had

not seen him since he returned &om America with his degree as an

engineer. Mr. Qhin had been appointed on a government commission to extend motor-roads into the interior. Travelling with this commission, Poya would have the &cilities of special trucks and guest-houses, which were a problem for travellers there. There w^s nothing he desired more to satisfy his peculiar interest as a “strategist” than a thorough first-hand knowledge of the lands and rivers and topography of the interior. The appointment of this commission was a promise that Hiina was planning to develop bases inland, without which further struggle would have been inqx}ssible. It was the most hopeful news he had heard since the feU of Nanking. Through his friend, he got himself appointed as an “expert,” on the flnnsy ground that he had been connected with the Peking Institute of Geological Survey. On history he was better prepared; Ku Yenwu’s great historical geography was his fovourite book, and since he became interested in strategy, he had re-read the Tbrve Kingdom and had studied the fomous historical can^paigns.

When his appointment came, he showed it to his wife, and she believed him.

“How ate you going?”

“All over the south-west. There will be a network connecting Kweilin, Hengyang, Kunming, and Chungking with Kweiyang as the centre.”

“Where is Kweiyang?”

Poya looked at her, amused. ' ‘It is the capital of Kweichow province. You are a college graduate and you never heard of it?”

“I learned it at school when I was small. How; do you expect me to remember it?”

“You know where Burma is, I hope?”

“I cion’t — yes, I know it is down south in Indo-China.”

“Well, it is neat Indo-China, but it is not in Indo-China. That is pretty good for you, however.”

“Don’t be so cynical. Who ever cnres what happens to Bu rma, thousands of miles away ftom us?”

This was so exasperating that later Po]^ tested his other women relatives. Only Paofen knew where Kweiyang was. Dim-fragfancTR knew no thing, and Lola thought that Burma was “somewhere east of Thibet”

“Whether you know where Burma is or not, it is going to mean

a great deal to China’s siurvival in this ■war,” he said to them, as he had said to Kainan, and he found them equally puzzled. “We ate

going to build a road to Burma.”

“What for?” asked Lola.

"Because we shall need a back door.”

"But there are so many ports. Aren’t we getting supplies from Hong Kong and Canton?”

"'Ihe entire China Sea -will be blockaded sooner or later. Canton may be closed to us.”

“You are crazy.”

“There is one who is not crazy, and who thinks as I do.”

“Who is it?”

“General Chiang himself. He has ordered a road to be built, over two thousand kilometres, connecting Burma with Chung-king.”

“By the time that toad is built, the war will be o'Ter,” said Tan.

“Shall I tell you the story? An American engineer told General Chiang it would take five years to complete that road across such difficult terrain. Chiang called in a Chine se engineer and ordered him to btuld it in one year. The engineer was dumbfounded, but

General Chiang said: TTou have my order. Within one year.*

*yes sir, yes sir,' said the engineer and bowed himself out. That does sound crazy, doesn't it? But it is the best news I have heard. It means that we are planning to fight for years."

^Tor years!" exdaitned Lola in horror.

*Tor years, I say. While you ladies are sitting here, somebody is planning fax ahea^ strategically, to make long resistance possible. It sounds like a fairy tale, but it is true. You say we are getting supplies &om Canton. How do the supplies go up to Hankow?"

"By the railway, of course."

'TDo you know who built the Canton-Hankow Railway, and when?"

None of them knew.

"Well, Chiang had it built and completed by day and night labour, the workmen working by torchlight at night, just in time for the -war. He anticipated the loss of Shanghai, when nobody else -was t hinking of it. Suppose Chiang had not foreseen the blockade and had not built the Canton-Hankow Railway, and the Hangchow-Changsha Railway, how would we be getting our supplies now? Now he is thinking already of the Burma Road."

Poya had made his point and the ladies looked at him in new admiration.

“What are you doing?”

“Well, I am supposed to be an expert on geography. Mr. Qun and I are going together.”

“Are you going as fet as Burma?” asked Lola.

“Probably not. A whole network of motor-roads in the south-west is being planned, and I shall travel fi;om place to place.”

He rattled oS the names of provinces and cities which meant nothing to the ladies, except that they were all in the south-west. He told them he would go first to Hengyang in Hunan, but instead of the sea route, his engineer ftiends preferred the Hangdiow-Changsha Railway which crossed three provinces, and whi^ also had been completed in the year before the war.

He was engrossed in his new interest, for the work lay dose to his heart. It gave him a chance to femiliarize himself wi^Qiina’s topography, and he loved travel and the sense of taking part even indicecdy in the war. The surveying commission did not tie him down to office routine, which would have been unbearable to

him; he could cover a wide area and get a general view of the progress of the war. His knowledge of the names of mountains and rivers in the provinces surpris^ Mr. Chin and Mr. Moy, the Cantonese engineer, who was going with them. Mr. Chin had never been ^ther than Ifiinkow, and Mr. Moy knew only Kwangtung and Kwangsi. The Cantonese's name was really Mei, but like all Cantonese, he stubbornly called himself Moy .

In the beginning of February, Poya was to leave with Chin and Moy. Since reforwarding his letter to Tanni, he had waited impatiently for her letter of explanation. But now the date of departure was fixed and he could wait no longer. When he came to say good-bye to Afei and the others he said that he expected to move about a great deal, but any letter could be forwarded by the National Motor-toad Association at Changsha.

Lao Peng's telegram came three days after he had left. Afei opened it and seeing only a message of safe arrival, enclosed it in a letter and forwarded it to Poya. Two weeks later, Tanni's long letter came. Kaman was visiting Paofen at the Burlington and seeing that the letter was ftom Himkow, she said: "Give it to me.

I will forward it." Though the envelope was marked "personal," she felt that she had the right to open it.

Tanni had pouted out het heart in that letter. It was half narrative and half c»nunent, full of het own thoughts and feelings, her remorse and her self-accusations, genuinely and intimatdy es 5 >ressed. The style was femiliar and affectionate. She blamed only herself, and told of her rage and her disappointment after meeting Poya at the dance hall and of how she had burned their pledge written on the silk. She asked him to forgive her and closed wim a pledge of her love, and she signed herself: ‘‘Your love, Liien*eth.”

K^inan was as much enraged as she was exultant that the letter had feUen into her hands and that she knew now the secret of Poya’s life. In triumph she wrote a scathing letter to Tanni, insulting her in rather cheap terms and advising her to end this af^r, since her husband had already forgotten all about it.

With the voyage to Ningpo and the delay in getting to the railway, it took Poya three weeks to readh Hengyang. Hengyang is a small city in southern Hunan on the south of the great Heng Moimtain, one of the Five Sacred Mountains of Quna. It was of great strategic importance as a military stronghold, sitting astride ihe Gmton-Hankow Railway and inq>enetrable to the enemy. It had a rmli&ry headquarters and an airfield, and thousands of soldiers had n^e the dty into a military camp.

Poya was delighted with the change to men’s company, new

work, and mountain scenery. He was once more happy with bimsft lf. Although he was over three hundred miles firom Hankow, he felt near to Tanni again, and once more feee and ready for romance. When he received the forwarded telegram at Changsha, the old romance stirred in his breast. He thought of taWng train to Hankow, but it would require a leave of absence and he had to start for Kweilin within three days. As an engioeer he was partly under the Military Affixes Commission and subject to military discipline. The chief of the commission, now waiting at KweUin, was an American-trained engineer who had helped to complete the Hangchow-Changsha Railway in record time, and his instructions for the surveying party were like military orders.

So he sent an affectionate telegram to lao Peng and Tanni, telling them what he was doing, and he wrote a letter to her.

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The next day he teceived a long tdegtam ficom her, saying how happy she was to hear ftom him and asking him if he had received the long letter of explanation which she had sent to Shanghai. If he had not received it, she said, he must love and forgive her, for in it she had explained everything, and it was Fate alone that was causing them all this trouble. She asked eagerly if he could not come to see her and asked for his exact address to make sure that

there was no naore delay in their mail. She begged hiirt to send her long letters as often as possible until they should meet again.

For the festival of the Buddha's Birthday, Poya went with his feiends to visit the femous temple to the God of the Sacred Mountain at Nanyo. There they ran into a bombing raid that killed fifty Buddhist pilgrims on the road. On the third day, they moved on, and it was at Shaoyang, a week later, that he received the first letter feom Tanni.

Dbah Elder Brother Pota:

I cannot tell you how happy I am at this moment. When your telegram came feom Hengyang, I wouldn't believe it until Unde Peng gave it to me. ^Tle has come," Unde Peng said. I didn't know what to say. Poya, Fate has been crud with us; the Creator plays with men like puppets. For two long months, I waited for your letter, but it did not come. 1 did not write to you, thinking that you despised me or that your women relatives had talked against me. The world was shattered ft>r me. 1 was like a lone wa 3 rferer asking entranpe into a family garden, and the garden door was shut in my face. Imagine how I £dt when I saw you walk out of the dance hall, ignoring mel The world collapsed around me, and in the days that followed, 1 hated you — ^yes, 1 hated you. But I never called you "swine"; liat was Yumei, the foolish girll But now I am happy and you are near, and I am going to write you every day, or as often as I can. Yumei is laughing at me, but 1 don't cate. 1 don't cate who laughs. I don't care what your wife

thinks. 1 don’t care what the world thinks. life has returned to me. I was foolish — at least Yumei thought so, for she was angry with you and still is — ^but I will be foolish again. Oh Poya, I wiU go with you to the ends of the earth, even if 1 have to wafa tiU my feet blister and dimb till my hands bleed. For this I know, that you are my life, that I will be your wife, your mistress or your kept woman, if only I can be near you. I am surprised at myself. I

thought I hated you and that I could live without you. But now a telegram &om you has changed everything. The mere feeling that you are near has brought life back to me. I must tell you that I got a letter firom your wife three days ago. My letter to you fell into her hands. She wrote just to abuse me. Now we have to face it. She had a right to be angry, for in that letter I wrote you as I am writing now. To you I will lay bare my soul, even as I have laid bare my body in glad surrender. You were wrong when you did not want to hear about my past. How could you understand me without knowing about my past? How could you know what you meant to me without Imowing the abyss into which I had sunk? A girl was born and left an orphan at seventeen. She has drifted away from "good” society, tossed about by the desires of men. Has that girl no right to live, to love, no right to a husband and a home of her own? I wanted home, happiness, and a man who did not look upon me as a plaything

and who completely understood me. Above all, I wanted the simple respect of my fellow men. Then you came into my life. Could you blame me for loving you? I wanted you to love me and you did. What has happened thereafter is too bewildering, but I will leave it behind, and I will never doubt you again, no matter what happens. I am happy now, here with Lao Peng, taking care of a dozen refugees, in a house up on the slope of the Hungshan, near Wuchang dty. Yumei^s baby was bom, but she killed it because the neighbours were saying it was a Japanese baby. Lao Peng has changed me and he has taught me something about Buddhism. I can understand now why he is so happy. And I am glad that you are doing useful work for Chdna. X^i^tever it is, keep me informed of all that you are doing. When will you cpme to Hankow?

This letter is so long already, and yet I haven^'t told you about the traitor I lived with. He was using my name for all telegrams and letters, but I didn’t know that his outgoing letters were also in my name. When I found out what he was doing, I left him, and it was I who gave them information so that they could raid the place. Lao Peng knows all. Lao Peng is thinner. Love from

Younger Sister Lien-erh.

CHAPTER XVn

In March, Hankow, the wartime capital, had become a centre of seething activities. Posters, parades, mass meetings, and the seemingly interminable passing of troops and war supplies coloured the city. There had been intense fighting in Shansi, Shantung, and Anhwei. The Japanese were pushing down the Peiping-Hankow Railway, but after eight months of war, they were ^ ftom securing control of southern Shansi. The regular army and the guerrillas in Shansi were already demonstrating the effectiveness of their fighting, which prevented the enemy ftom crossing the Yellow River. On the Tientsin-Pukow Railway, the Japanese were pushing north ftom Nanking and southward ftom Tientsin. For some unintelligible reason, the enemy tried to converge on Hsuchow, the railway junction, instead of coming west up the river straight toward Hankow, and thus lost another six months. This was extremely valuable to China, and trebled the Japanese losses in the Yangtse campaign. The enemy, under-estimating China’s resistance, and still beaming of a short war, had committed one tactical error after another.

The aisis for China had passed. Chiang Kai^ek announced that in two months’ time the strength of the Chinese forces would be twice what it was at the outbt^ of the war. He was visiting various fighting ftonts. On every front, the Chinese were stublpotnly contesting the ground. The Japanese had captured

Pengpu on February 4th. Tokyo issued an official statement that became the talk of the town for its najvet6. It said that Chinese losses on the Peiping-Hankow Railway and Shansi fronts for the week February loth to February 17th numbered “no less than 30,000” and Japanese losses were “56 killed.” The fighting was either a campaign or a skirmish; it could not be both.

The people in Hankow were greatly heartened by the sight of new military equipment going north to the battle front. The Chinese Air Force had been strengthened by the arrival of Soviet planes and pilots. On February i8th, Hankow watched a spectacular air battle in which twelve out of twenty-seven enemy planes were brought down. It was reported that China had decided to abandon defensive strategy for offensive tactics, the change to be effected in April. Chma was shifting the army

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commands, with Generals Li Tstmgjen and Tang Enpo guarding the two r^way ftonts, and Generals Hu Tsungnan and Wei T-ihuaug checking the enemy approach along the Yellow River. Moreover, Chiang was taking personal command of the Shansi and Honan ftonts. A great battle was e:q>ected around Hsuchow in April.

Soon after Poya’s letter came ftom Hengyang, Lao Peng went

away and stayed at a hotel in Hankow. Tanni could not tell whether the decision of Lao Peng to go away had anything to do with Poya's arrival in the interior, or whether it was purely a coincidence. When he handed her Poya's letter, he was quite as visibly upset as she was. "He has come," he said simply, and his voice shook. Tanni was excited herself. Po3a's telegram was brief, but the words were significant: "Have arrived at Hengyang with highway commission. My heart bums to see you. Coming to join you after surveying tour and keep company with firiends who understand music. Poya." The reference to "friends who understand music" was an apparent allusion to the legend of the two music lovers, which, though in common usage, l^d a special significance for Tanni. Her eyes were wet, and in her joy she disregarded what Lao Peng was feeling. They were in his room. She sank into a chak.

Lao Peng saw her tears and said with deep emotion: "I am so happy, so very happy for you."

"Oh, the worst is over now. He is comingl" she said. She gulped down a throatfril of happiness and her lips began to move as if she were chewing that happiness slowly, in little morsels, as a gourmet samples exquisite food.

"And now you wul leave us, when he comes," said Lao Peng with a touch of sadness.

"Why, Uncle Peng, I have told you already that I would never

leave you.”

But he did not say anything then.

That night she went again to his room:, fall of new enthusiasm and great plans. ‘‘Even as you desire, Poya will join your work,” she said. “With his money we can save not a doaen, but hundred of refugees. Do you remember that night at Changfrtsan when I made you a promise — to spend that money to help others?”

“I hope he will do as you say,” he said, with less enthusiasm in his voice than she expected.

‘•But you approve. It was your own idea.”

Lao Peng looked at ket strangely, seemingly occnpied with his own thoughts.

“Yes,” he said finally. “But of course you must be married to Him as soon as possible.”

*‘Yes. And you will always be welcome in out house, one of our femily.”

He replied after a long pause; “There is such a thing as each individual's destiny. Per^ps our destinies lie separate. Perhaps I wiU go up to a mountain and become a monk.”

Tanni was astonished. “But, Unde, I can’t allow that! This Buddhism is terriEying. It may be true, but it is terrifying.”

“You mean that it is difficult. One may keep the peace of the Buddha for a year, and lose it in a day. No, Tanni, do not take me for a wise man. Sometimes I am as confus^ as yourself.”

Tanni knew now that Lao Peng loved her, since her promise to marry him, and this made it very hard for her, and they became self-consdous even while pretending to be natural.

The next day he went to stay at the hotel in Hankow on the pretext that he must see many people, induding Grandma Chao, but her intuition told her that it was to get away firom her.

In her next letter to Poya, she wrote;

I do not know what has happened to Unde Peng. A change has come over him. He says he is going to be a monk. That is unlike bitn. You know he is a Buddhist, but he even eats beef. He has only been interested in living for others. Now he says he is going away, perMps to be a monk. Anyway, he seems unha^^y and he does not talk much. He says he is not feeling well. Two days ago

he went to Hankow to stay at a hptd, and he has not come ba^
He mentioned goiog to Chitungshan for a rest. He has a good
place to rest here and I can give him every kind of food he needs.
I almost feel that he wants to avoid me. This Buddhism is a crazy
thing. I went yesterday to the hotd and he was glad to see me and
snaled when I entered. I asked him; “Do you want a rest?” and
he said “Yes,” and I said; 'Do the women and children at the hiU
annoy you?” and he said: “No.” He seemed to be happy to see
me, and when I left, I asked him; 'Do you want me to come
again?” and he said: “No,” and then changed his mind and said:
"Yes, I shall be glad to see you.” Somdiow he grew distant from

me. He gave me two hundred dollars and asked me to look after
the refugees, just for a few days. You know he has been running
this house for refugees all with his own money, except that I have
taken out some of my own money to help. He said that Grandma
Qiao, the Mother of the Guerrillas, is in the city and he has to see
certain other people. But Buddhism is a crazy thing. I hope he
does not get too deep in it. He is looking very sad. I still say that
I have never met a better, kinder man in ^ my life, yourself
included. I know you will agree.

Younger Sister Lien-erh.

A few days later, Poya’s second letter ftom Hengyang came.

Dear Sister Lien-erh:

I told you in my last letter that I am with a commission of engineers to plan a system of highways in the interior. The trip wiU take us several months. By May, at the latest, I shall be in Hankow.

I must tell you what I saw at Nanyo. Yesterday I went there with my friends because it was Buddha's Birth^y and many pilgrims had come ftom aftr to worship. We passed most magnificent scenery on the way. The Nanyo is worthy of its name, with its massive, jagged rocks stretching up into the clouds. Everything was grand and strong and firm. The bamboos grow to an unbelievable height. I never saw such a sight before. Pilgrims crowded the mountain paths ftom all directions. We came ftom the south, but many came ftom the neighbourhood of Qiangsha in the north. The roadside was lined with beggars all the way to the temple. Holiday was in the atmosphere. There were many brightly dressed women and children, mostly ftom the country. A few wealthy ladies came in sedan chairs, but the devout preferred to wai and they knelt every three steps and prostrated themselves on the road. The sun was shining and it was a beaudful scene, with many of the pilgrims m bright blue new dress and the women in red skirts, all carrying bright yellow knapsacks across their shoulders. I was told t^t some wore the suits in which thq^ ate going to see the gods, that is, when th^

are dressed for burial, so that the gods will recognize them.

The Nanyo Temple is large and has many halls. When we

teached the main temple, a service was going on. The Buddhas had had new robes put on them. The air was thick with incense. The monks were chanting thek prayers, and worshippers filled the place, lighting candles and incense before the Buddhas.

At about half-past eleven my Mends suggested that we go down to the town for lunch. A stream of men and women were stiU comity up the path. We didn't know there had been an ak-raid alarm, but the people coming up told us. Soon we heard a distant rumble and saw tiny specks in the sky. The planes came so &st that in less than a minute they were over the city and dropped thek bombs there. Most of the pilgrims made for shelter in the woods, but the mountain path was narrow and jammed with people. I hid in a bamboo grove with my Mends, while the planes roared and machine-guns crackled over our heads. The planes were only two or three hundred feet above the ground, and the noise of the engines was deafening. When I thought they were leaving, they returned a second titne and ckded over our heads, again tnachine-gunniag the pilgrims.

When 1 rushed out, I heard the crying of women and the shoutiog of men. Fifty yards away there was an open space. It was a shambles. At this spot over twenty men and women and many children were killed and a number more were wounded.

You have probably seen bombing in Hankow, but this was my first experience. For the first time I saw the raw work of the Japanese Army. What object, what motive, what purpose could be served by slaughtering a handful of religious pilgrims? What could the enemy expect to gam by it? It is true ftiat there were a few men in uniform, but there was no mistaking those brightly-dressed pilgrims for a company of soldiers. The enemy should have some knowledge of the ground tiiey were flying over; they could not have been ignorant of the Nanyo. Thek orders must have been to shoot anything that moved, and the pilots must have seen the rushing crowd who could not make themselves invisible ftom the ak.

The monks came out and carried the dead and wounded into the temple. So ended a strange Buddha’s Bkthday.

The character of this war is becoming clear. In no city or village will our people be safe ftom murderous attack. The brutality of the Japanese Army which we have known since the invasion of Mandiuria continues to show itself in astonishing ways. 1

■watched the expression of the people after the machine-gunning ■of pilgrims. They took it for gtantedl They did not even Buddha for feiUng to protect them. Outwardly nothing happened, but in their stoic acceptance of the inevitable, a smouldering, silent rage seemed to have entered their souls, the more terrifying because they did not bestir themselves or utter angry words. The dead had died anyhow; the survivors considered themselves lucky; There '^s a certain nobility about these peasant souls. The Old Asia had met the New Asia. I should have thought they -would have been terrified, as if some Evil Monster out of Srfttki had leaped forth into the ait. But these peasants were really unmo-ved. How curious that such an appalling disaster, murder from the aic by modem machines, should be taken for grantedl These ignorant, patient peasants were conftonted with a feet, that dpath can come ftom the aic. They had seen it. And they had seen -with their own eyes that this death came ftom Japan. This feet was final. Every illiterate peasant knows that the Japanese in the planes overhead are out to destroy him and his wife and children. That is what the Japanese bombers say to them. There is not a single Chinese in whatever province who has not seen a Japanese bomber now. The silent, smouldering rage of four hundred and fifty million people must be an immense historical force. And this must have something to do -with the heroism of our soldiers and the morale and unity of the nation. The enemy air force is therefore the best propaganda corps for out Government, the best tonic for our moriw. It reaches milli ons -who cannot read

and write and cannot be reached by newspapers. The sound of the bombers is like a broadcast ftom the sky, a call to racial .hatred. But the end is not yet. Our people may have to endure this murder ftom the air ft>r years to come. From the feces of these people, I have learned something new about China. Our people can take air raids and endure them, as they have endured floods and femines for centuries. . . .

Tanni put the letter iu her handbag and went to see Lao Peng. She -was taking some dean laundry to him. The -women at the house had been -washing his dothes, for Wang Tamang had insisted that it would be a crime to send it out. On the way, die picked up Chiuhu and a new ftiend Miss Tuan, who had joined Madame Ouang's War-Area Service Corps; They had agreed to

go and see the K^iraiigsi giri soldiers who had arrived the previoxis day and aeated a great sensation in the dty. Five hundred of these girl soldiers 1^ walked a great part of the way, uadi they teachra the railway at Qiangsha.

The people of Hankow were by this time used to parades and to the sight of girl workers. The war atmosphere was heightening every day. l3ie shock of the &11 of Nanking was over and the war had taken the detinite pattern of a long struggle to the bitter end.

The first confusion and turmoil had subsided. ' Refugees had disappeared fi;om the streets, being distributed inlantT, mostly by their own arrangements with their relatives in the provinces. Instead, Hankow now saw every day the passing of armies war equipment to the front and the transportation of &ctory machinery up the river. Steamers daily left the whar&, canying refugees, students, and teachers, and industrial equipment up to Qxungkiag. Military, politi^ and educational leaders were consta^yarrivinganddeparting for the fronts. The scene in the streets was alter^ by the presence of many young men and women in uniform — boy scouts, gttl scouts, aic-raid wardens, nurses in white caps and white dresses, MadWe Quangos War-Area Service workers, and the Sanminchuyi Youth Units.

Where had these people come fcom and how had these organizations sprung up? The curious thing was that there was at the same time too little and too much organization. In the traditional Qhinese way, there were no tightening war measures, even after half a year of full-scale war; no regimentation of labour, no rationing of food, no priorities, no control of capital, no fixing of price levels, no con^ulsory sale of bonds, no war surtax, no tax on luxuries, no income tax, no limitation of restaurant hours, no drafting of doctors and nurses, and no conscription except in the inland provinces. Conscription had not touched the average hoime. factory equipment moved up the river because the individual owner wanted it and had by round-about personal arrangements been allowed to do so. Students matched across the mountains, not because the Government could

compel them, but because they wanted to attend classes in Free China. Girls became nurses and joined the war work because they wanted to. Thousands of others joined the guerrillas with nothing but empty stomachs and hearts full of young enthusiasm. The children’s dmnatic corps, a band of some sixty young boys

that started ftom Shanghai and toured the provinces to do mt propaganda, was organized and led by a boy. Girls organised Ae singing of patriotic songs on the ferry between Hankow and Wuchang because it satisfied their inner needs.

Out of these spontaneous, volunteer individual efforts came the awe-inspiring picture of a whole people at war, and a confidence of unity and victory. It was apparent that an immense historical force, as Poya called it, was at work. It had nothing to do with governmental decrees. The war was being carried on because the people themselves, after waiting for eight long years in helpless indignation against the steady Japanese encroachments since 1931, and being told by the Government to "keep calm,” at last 1 ^ found a Government and a leadership determined to carry he struggle for China’s independence to the finish. That pent-up national rage against the Japanese, borderiug on mania, burst forth like a flood that snapped steel and concrete with the terriSc momentum of gathered atomic energy that is in the weak sub-

stance called water.

But the appearance of the five himdred Kwangsi gkl soldiers, trained and equipped, not to do war-area service, but to take part in the fighting, to depart in a few days for the Hsuchow ftont, created a sensation even in this war-wise city.

Tanni and her ftiends went to see their camps, and then, with the absence of restraint among modem girls, went to see Lao Pe^ at his hotel. The hotel was extremely noisy and disorderly with many officers and men in uniform, living the rip-roaring life of soldiers on leave.

Lao Peng was sitting alone iu his room. Poya’s telegram and the realization that he was coming back had cfisturbed him in a way he had not expected. The possibility of marrying Tanni had at once changed his relationship to her. He saw her as a sweet-heart and future wife, and he realized that without knowing it he had come to love her personally and passionately. The nights they had spent together reading the Buddhist Scriptures under the lan^light had at first disturbed him, and then had given him pleasure. He knew that his feeling for her had grown all through the period when she was caring for Yumei’s baby in his room, and when their eyes had met over the dead child’s body he knew he loved her.

A less sensitive conscience would have passed the situation

without a qualm, and besides he was elderly. Suddenly he felt the supreme irony of it — to be caught in the meshes of passion, at forty-fivel To young and warm Tanni he would always be the good 'TJnde.” Yet what was love? Where was the border between the natural aflFection of congenial and devoted friends and the deeply personal love between man and woman? How unconvincing the theory of Buddha’s impersonal love seemed nowl Certainly he had come to love Tanni as a person. How else should it be? To abolish personal hatred was easier than to abolish personal love. If the assumption of self and individuality was the origin of all struggle and of all hatred, it was also the strongest basis of our sentient life. He loved Tanni as a person; it was useless for him to think of her as an abstract woman, or as a pack of emotions and desires, now that he had come to know her. Her voice, her look, her concern for his comfort — ^how was he to regard these with an impersonal selfless love?

In feat of himself, he had run away from her. Now he craved to hear her voice, to see her free, smiling, or occupied in thought over some trifle, or wrapped in deep concern over the sick Pinpin. Since that memorable night when he had ofieted to give her child his name, her casual sylkbles, her half-uttered whispers, her languid remarks, the slightest movement of her lips had struck him like electric impulses. There was no question that he was in

love.

When Tanni and her friends came in, he stood up to greet them. He had just finished his lunch, and die dishes still lay on the table. Smiling at Tanni’s bright free, he bustled about to roake his guests comfortable as he always did.

Miss Tuan was introduced by Chiuhu. She had come in her training dress, a brown blouse tucked inside blue overalls and topped by a deep blue sweater. Her hair, clipped short behind her neck, showed beneath a tilted cap which resembled the frtigue cap of American soldiers. Her hanch were constantly thrust into her trouser pockets. like many girls taking part in political or war work, she talked and laughed with girlish enthusiasm, with the pride and self-confidence which their work gave them and with a little secret delight in theic new uniform.

In an effort at hospitality, Lao Peng ordered coffee. The waiter forgot to bring sugar, and !^ss Tuan said that she could not wait, because she had to go and join her dass. She drank her coffee and

found it bitter, and seeing a sait-cellat on the table, she sprinkled some salt in die coffee. When they laughed at her, she snatched the pepper and added some to the coffee and then drank it.

'•Madame Qiiang says the first principle of work in war areas is resourcefulness," she said, and sneezed. "But I must be offl"

Snatching her army cap and still sneezing, she gaily said good-bye and left, walking in long ftee strides in her overaUs.

Tanni looked at her admidngly. "She is funny," she said. "But in comparison with her we are too refined."

"You would be, for real war work," said Lao Peng.

don't know. If I had the overalls, I might walk as fest as she does. That tilted cap is very cute."

The girls went back to their seats on the bed, and Tanni handed Lao Peng the letter ftom Poya.

He read it slowly and folded it slowly and gave it bade to her.

"Barbarousl" he exclaimed, his eyes dilated. "To attack religious pilgrims with machine-guns. But Poya is ri^ Throughout the length and breadth of this land Japanese bombers are the best advertisement of Japanese cruelty."

Tanni had never seen such depth of feeling in him. His indignation passed in a minute, but in that minute she saw his soul. She noticed how large his eyes really were, proportioned to

his large forehead and ftame. The great size of his eyes had usually been concealed by his easy manners and his stoop.

“Are you coming back to us?” she asked. “Or are you really going away to be a monk?”

Lao Peng laughed aloucL ‘T. cannot go away at such a timel The monks themselves ate coming out to do war work.”

“I am so glad,” she said warmly.

“There are too many things to be done,” he went on. “There is a Dr. Chow of PeipiM who has come with his wife, and they ate setting up a hospitd tot the wounded soldiers with their own money. Grandma Chao is in the dty. She has ootait with her son ftom Shansi to raise money for the guerrillas. I saw them yesterday. She told me our guerrillas fought all winter in the snowy mountains, many of them even without shoes. I may go up north with them and take a look.”

“You won’t leave our house on the hill?”

“It will only be for a short trip. I need a change. Wai^ TattfOHi can help you. She is a capable woman and the people wiH

listen to her, if tihere should be any trouble.” He looked at Qbiuhu, then turned to Tanni and said with a kind voice: "Tanni, I don’t think you will have anything to worry about. You have friends, and ^uhu can come up and stay with you. Chiuhu, won’t you?”

Cbiuhu smiled her assent. “Have you seen the girl soldiers?” she asked afrer a pause.

*Yes, I have. There were crowds watdtung yesterday as they marched through the streets. There were five hundred of them, infullwar^earl”

“Ohl” said Tanni involuntarily.

For a fraction of a second Tanni and Lao Peng looked at each other, a mere look that passed with the quickoess of lightning and could not or should not be held.

"Speakdng of girl soldiers,” he said, “Grandma Qiao told me a story of the recent figki-ing at Linfen. Several hundred women met and fought with a contingent of Japanese. The women had little equipment, and many of diem were killed by the enemy who had more and better guns. Some fled and a small unit was cornered in a rice field. Knowing what would be their fete if they surrendered, the women separated diemselves into two groups and divided the remaining hand grenades equally between the

two groups. Then th^ threw them at each other before the Japanese could get at them.”

Afrer this story they all sat silent for a while, then Tanni said that they must go.

They said good-bye affectionately, as they had always done. Tanni had no wish to intrude herself upon Lao Peng; the best thing under the circumstances was for her to be natural. She could not divine surely his motive for going away.

Left alone, Lao Peng sat and meditated. In spite of himself he jfelt in good spirits. He felt that everything was as it should be, that nothing had changed and nothing could go wrong; Tanni’s love for Poya was dear and ezplidt. Her attachment to hims d f was pure and natural, and could remain so even though she were married to his fidend. He knew that he had nothing to' fisar from her. Yet he was not so sure of himself. He looked about the room. Her .body had left, but the shadow of her presence remained. As he looked at the pared she had left for him, he trembled and whispered: “OTannil”

z8i

O Sister Goddess of Merq^I Before his mind, -with consdous effort, passed the many scenes of their association together: Her

first s^-revelation under the dump of trees on the Western Hilh,

and hot? she bent on the toad to tie his shoelace for . . . het

ride on the donkey, in het disguise as a m^ which only em-
her feminine contours ... die night at the Tientsin
hotel, and her laughter and her tears as she told him of her past
. . . how she sat up on the sofe that night at Changfetsan. . . ;
She stood before him now, het eyes wet, over the dead body of
Yumei's child. He remembered her voice, her eyes, her every
gesture, the way she bit her lips. O fooll He knew he had loved
her t hm as he knew he loved het now. Living in the world of
Xama, he was subject to the laws of Kama. Even if the world of
was nothing but illusion, his feelings for her were
immensdy and terrifically real. For the greater the man, the
deeper he loves.

He wanted to escape, to flee from her, and yet only from him-
self. He would immerse himself in a thousand activities, in scenes
of war and turmoil. He decided that he must go north, wiih
Grandma Chao, or with whoever was leaving for the front.

CHAPTER XVm

PoTA HAD gone to ICweilin, and there had been no letter from him
for ten days. Tanni still saw Lao Peng often when she went into
Hankow. One day there would be a parade of the fami li e s of

wounded soldiers, on another a public meeting in which Grandma Chao was to speak. Tanni was coming to be interested in all the war efforts, and particularly in Madame Chiang's War-Area Service Corps. Through Chiuhu she had come to know Miss Tuan well. She liked her spirit of fun, as she liked most of the young girl workers she had met. They were not all as c harming as Miss Tuan, but they were the generation to which she herself belonged.

She now called Miss Tuan by het first name. Wen. They were both addids of the motion pictures. Coming attractions were the subject of animated discussions between the two girls, and for two

weeks ahead they knew and remenibefed what film was cxtming and in which theatre. As Miss Tuan was usually busy in the day* time, she could not see matinees except on week-ends, but sometimes Tanni would come to the city in the evening and sometimes Chiuhu would go with them.

Once, coming back from the theatre at night, they went to visit Lao Peng and found him a litde drunk. Seeing him sitting silently at his desk, the three ghrls went away and left him without speaking.

A few days later something happened which made it necessary for Lao Peng to go back to Hungshan. The old woman who was staying in the room with ihe coifins said that she had something very important to say to Lao Peng. She had been failing in her health greatly. She ^d not mingle with the other refugees in the house, and it seemed that her mind had shrivelled like her body. When she asked why she had not seen Peng hu^eb these many days, Tanni told her that he ms going away. The old woman put her skinny, spotted, wrinkly Imd upon Tanni, and screwed up her eyes to look at her.

“You are the Sister Goddess of Mercy, are you not? My old eyes are dim. Do a good deed and ask your unde to come and see me. I am going to die now and I have something to tell him.”

So Tanni went and told Lao Peng and brought him back wifri her.

When they went in to the old woman, she was lying in bed. She was ve^ happy to see Lao Peng.

“I am going to die,” she said. "I have lived long enough. lam an old woman, of no more use to the world. I hear you are going away, and therefore I have asked to see you . . .”

With her feeble shaking hands, she raised herself and groped for ,a pared beside her pillow. She unloosed the knot slowly and took out a little pac^ge wrapped in an old newspaper, and clutching it

tightly she said to Lao Peng:

“You are a good man, Peng layth You have given me shdter and food in my last days. I have only one thing more to do now, and I know I can trust you.”

She unwrapped the package.

“I have here three hundred dollars, the savings of my lifetime Wm you buy me a coflBn?”

‘T^du are not gomg to die, Old Grandmother,” said Lao Peng

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“No, my days are done. My son will never come back. I am only waiting for my coffin, and then I will die. Can I have a good, strong cofiin for a hundred dollars? I dare not hope for a good one like those over there, but I want it to be of Imd wood. It need not be very big, but when I see it I shall die in peace.”

She handed the package to Lao Peng and said: ‘Tfou count it. There must be diee hundred dollars. My eyes can’t see any more.”

He cotinted the notes. Most of them were issued in the time of

the Peking Regime, and were entirely valueless now, but he did notteUherso.

"It is correct. Three hundred dollars."

"Will you buy a good coflSn for me to-day? I want to see it. One hundred or one hundred and twenty dollws will do it. Then give twenty-five dollars to any one who will wash my body and comb my hair for the burial. This dress I have is old now. Buy me a dress, yes, a silk dress, and silk skirts and a pair of new shoes. I have never worn silk in all my life. My little body does not require a very big silk dress now. Will you do this for me?"

"Of course, if it is your wish. I will buy them for you to-day," replied Lao Peng. Then he said: "Do you want monks to say prayers for you?"

"No," said the old woman. "The Buddha did not help me to find my son. Spend some twenty dollars on my burial. I like the view on the hill here, so just have a grave dug in ihe neighbour-hood. And I shall thank you and the Sister Goddess of j\focy for giving me a peaceful place to die in."

She was panting, but she went on. "I don't want to 'be a burden to you or to anybody. Take this money and give me a decent burial. There may be a himdred and £% dollars left over. Keep them for my son if he comes back."

"Who is your son and where is he?”

“His name is Chen San. I don’t know where he is. I have been looking for him these many years, and he never came back to his old mother. I lost him when he was a boy of sixteen. When the Manchu Empire fisll, the revolutionists took him away.”

"How old is he?”

"He must be over Sattf now. Perhaps he is a fether now. Or perhaps he is dead, else he would have come back to his mother. I saved this money for him, coin by coin, copper by copper, while

I \ras waiting for him to come back. If be comes, give the rest of the money to him. Give him my mother’s love and tell him that I left some clothing for him — ^with the Third Daughter of Yao family in Peking — ^years ago.”

"\15hich Yao family of Peking?” asked Tanni, suddenly interested.

‘‘They lived at the Prince’s Garden, and I was working for the Third E)aughter of the family.”

“How many years ago was that?”

“It must have been twenty years now,” she said, and could speak no more.

Lao Peng had met Qien San only a year ago and had heard ftom Poya the famous story of the lost son, whose mother had been working with the Yao family. He had heard how this woman worked and sewed at night to make clothing for her son in case she should ever find him, and how once every month, she asked leave and took the new clo thing under her arm and foamed the streets of Peking, stopping young men and soldiers in the hope of finding her son, and how she always came back sad and dis-appointed, and how one day, when soldiers filled the dty, she was sure her son had returned and took leave of her mistress and disappeared, and never returned. Later, Qien San had come back and married the sister of Kung lifti, Mochow’s husband.

But Lao Peng had no idea where these were now, and he knew only they had joined the guerrillas fighting in Shansi. He talked in whispers with Tanni.

“We must send a telegram to Poya,” said Tanni. “But tell her first. It may make her want to live.”

Lao Peng turned to the old woman and said: “We know the Yao family of Peking. Old Grandmother, you must not die.”

But the old woman could not hear very well.

“Your son came back and was married,” shouted Tanni in her ear. “Peng layeh has seen him at the Yao house.”

The old woman reached out her faltering hand and clutched Tanni.

“You say my son has come back? And he is still living? Where is he?” she exclaimed.

'“He is living,” said Lao Peng. “We will find him for you.”

The old woman began to cry, but even her weeping was feeble.' Only her head and her body were shaking more than usual

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“Where is he? Did you see hiui?” she said, now -wiping her eyes.

'•He is well and tall and strong,” said Lao Peng. “He is up north. We are going to ask him to come and see you. The war separated you, modier and son, and the war will bring you together again. I know the Yao family. Your son is related to them. He married the daughter oftheKung family.”

The old woman put her hand to her ear and her eyes peered at Lao Peng, in an e&>rt to comprehend what he was sa ying s and memory came back to her, and she said; “You mean that he is married to Mr. Kung’s sister? A good gH, she was, and I was serving her, too. Where can we find my son? Take my money and send it to him. Ask him to come with my daughter-in-law and see his mother before she dies. Let me see his fece and hear his voice, and I shall die happy.” She shook her head and smiled and pant**^ and smiled again.

“Shall I buy the coffin now?”

^Tfes, buy my coffin. I shall wait for my son to come and then I shall die.”

Lao Peng went in to Hankow to send the telegram to Poya, and he bought a good maplewood coffin.

The following day when the coffin came, Qienma was able to come out to the front room to see it. Her fece beamed with pride as she felt the hard surfece of the maplewood. The women and children were staring at her and she said to them smiling ; “It is good, strong wood for my old body to lie in.” She had it moved into her room, and she often examined it and touched it and w happy.

Lao Peng said that he would stay to wait for Poya*s reply, but

while he had been away at Hankow, the sick girl Pinpin had befen moved into his room, and so he slept in the inner room, which Tanni had to pass through to reach the sick girl’s. That morning he had seen Tanni bring in some wild camellias to put in the vase that stood on the table before Pinpin’s window.

After l^ch, Tanni came to see the sick girl. Her bed lay dose to the window, and the foliage outside reflected the sunli ght, m a king the room quite bright. The ‘^1 was lying in bed, her eyes deep black and her fece hollow and flushed. She had been ficightened by the arrival of the coflin,fox she had seen it brought in through the front room.

Pinpia’s little biothet was with her. The girl in bed was teaching him the multiplication table.

Now and then Pinpin would halt and let her little brother take the lead. She saw Tanni come in, and smiled and went on with the table.

''Seven times seven forty-nine. Eight times seven fifty-six. Nine times seven six^tbree. Ten times seven seventy! We got through this time.”

The two children laughed triumphantly at the end. Tanni laughed with them. But she remembered that these were mother-less children and she felt beneath their innocent gaiety the pathos of this little girl teaching her younger brother.

“But you mustn’t tire yourself,” she said.

Pinpin said: ’‘Thank you for the flowers. I was asleep when you came in, but I knew you had put them there. The little rogue is very clever. He can say the multiplication table up to seven now. What comes next? Twelve times seven would be eighty-four — and then I get qonfused.”

“Your mind is too active,” said Tanni. ’‘Don’t you want to sleep now?”

’ ‘No, come and talk with me. Ihad enough sleep this morning.”

Tanni seated herself by the bed, and asked the boy to leave the room to give his sister a rest.

Lao Peng, in the next room, heard the conversation.

“How are you feeling now?” asked Tanni.

’ ‘I am aU right. The injections did me good. Except I still coughed a great deal, in the early hours of the morning, and then

by morning I felt so tired and sleepy. Sister Goddess of Mercy, why are you so beautiful?”

“It is because you like me.”

“No, it is true. I never saw anyone as beautiful as you ate and as kind as you are. You saved our lives, my &ther, my brother, and me. I want to grow up to be like you. How long do you think it will take to get well?”

“I don’t know. You must rest quietly and have good food and plenty of sunshine, and you will be well.”

’ ’\^en the war is over, you must come and visit us at Chin-Hang. We have a small house and a little c^den of our own. And our house looks out on a river, just nke here. It is the same Yangtse, my &.ther told me. And there is an island in

the river, called the Golden Hill, full of trees. We used to play on the bank until the war came.”

"Was your mother with you?”

“No, my mother died when my younger brother was bora

You must come and visit us when the war is over. We ate not rich, but I want you to see my home.”

"Yes, I win come and visit you.”

Suddenly the girl asked: "Do you thinV I am going to die?”

“Oh, no. You’ll grow up to ^ a beautiful girl. Why do you ask su(^ a question?”

“I saw the cofBn this morning, and I am afraid.”

“Don’t be afraid. The old woman bought it with her own money. She is very old, and you are a young girl. . Don’t thint- of such things. Game, shall we play cat’s-cradle again?”

Pinpin heartily agreed, and as they played, they went on tallrW

“I want to grow up as kind and gentle as you are. I wantt^ beautiful, but I cannot hope to be like you. Then I want to be a nurse and I den’t want to marry and just look beautiful all day.”

“You are t hinking very fer ahead,” said Tanni with a smile.

“But when you ate beautii^, somebody will fell in love with you. and then w^t?”

“Then I still won’t marry him.”

“Then you will be really unkind.”

“I hear in the stories that a man in love can almost die for a sight of the girl, and then get well when he sees her— is that true?”

Tanni, aware that Lao Peng was in the next room, answered shyly; “jPerhaps, it is true, if the girl is very beautiful and the man loves her very much.”

Thus they sat and talked and played the cat’s-cradle until Tanni said she must rest and mustn’t thinlr of the tniilttplirario n table and left her alone.

The following morning brought a pleasant surprise. Chentm kept asking for news, and Tanni told her she must be pati^nt^ foi she was uncertain whether Poya might not have already left Kweilin and missed the telegram.

That m orning Yumei came in to Tanni and said that a bcautiftl and weU-dressed lady had come to the house and asked to sec hfi<« Peng, and that a young man was with her. Tanni went out to see

them in the bare front room. The lady met her with a curious gaze, a lialf-smile upon her lips. She ms clad in a black gown

whi<^ Tanni could see was of the finest material, and carried a suMe handbag that certainly must have come ftom Shanghai. She was middle-aged and yet of perfect figure. There was something refireshing and original about her, a mellowed ease of manner, and an unusual grace and beauty. The young man was tall, with square shoulders and well-chiselled features, and he was in Chungshan uniform.

When the lady began to speak, Tanni heard the distinguished orthodox Peking accent. **1 am Mrs. Tseng. I am sorry to come like this without ceremony, but I had a telegram from Poya asking me to come and see you."

Tanni's heart leaped, and she cried out an involuntary "Ohl"

"Are you Miss Peng? I am Poya's Second Aunt. This is my son, Atung."

Tanni darted a swift glance at her and smiled acknowledgment.

"Oh, you are his aunt Mulanl You must excuse me for

appearing like this. I never dreamed of " She hastened to

move some stools, in a flurry that sent her hair falling over her shoulders. Her confusion was apparent upon her face.

Mulan said: got this telegram last night, and 1 was so excited

that I had to come and see you the first flung this morning.”

‘'We have been waiting to hear ftom Poya,” said Tanni, as she took the tdegram. While she was reading it, she was conscious that Mulan was watching her kindly, with that half-snule constantly hovering around her mouth.

Kindly visit Miss Tanni Peng in refugee house on Hungshan. Chen San’s mother is there. Help find out Chen San’s address. Please treat Miss Peng as your own relative, and invite her to your house for my sake. To know her is to appreciate her. Pota.

Tanni blushed a little as she came to the end of the tel^am. This was more than she had hoped for. She had not known that Mulan was in Hankow. When she was in Shanghai, Poya had told her of his famous Aunt Mulan with great fanaily pride and affection, and had spoken of her as living in Hangchow.

"When you know my Seepnd Aunt, you will be proud of me,” Poya had said. Instinctively she felt that this visit was

■weighted with consequences for her own future with Poya

fevering with escitement, she ran to call Lao Peng, and he went in and brought out Chenma, who came out tottering on her old legs.

Mulan rose and went very close to her^ and placed her han/^ o on her shoulders.

“Are you Chenma? I am Mulan, the Second Daughter of the Yao femily. Do you remember me?”

Ghenma looked up at Mulan with her filmy eyes, and coughed and tried to speak, but tears began to flow from her eyes, and she took up the end of her jacket and wiped them sil entl y. Mulan helped her to sit down on her stool, where she sat, still weeping.

Ta^ saw that Mulan was deeply stirred. For Mulan kne-w the full history of this woman, who for thirty years had been looking for her son and had borne alone and with fortitude the pxmishment that Fate had inflicted upon her motherhood. Tanni saw a pitying tear roll do'wn Mulan’s cheek as her rather tall slender figure bent orer Chenma. At last, with her head still bent, Chen San’s asked: “Where is my son?”

Mulan’s voice was warm and low as she replied: “He is well He is in the north. I will at once send a telegram and ask him to come do'wn to see you.”

■ ’THow many days will it take?”

“It will take one or two weeks, if he can come by the rail-way.”

The old woman now dried her tears and asked: “How did my son look when he returned?”

‘He -was tall and strong. He married Huan-erh, Lifu’s sister. They might come down together,” said Mulan with a great cfcrt to please her.

“Oh, I have a daughter-in-lawl Do I ha-ve a grandson?”

“Not that I know of. Would you like to come and stay in my house until your son and daughter-in-law come?”

The old woman replied that she was comfortable where she was.

T anni whispered to Mulan that the old woman had bought het coffin and daily spoke of her death. They assisted her back to her room. When Mulan saw the new coffin she was sh r»rk‘‘d .

“Can you persuade her to leave this room and come to stay with you?” said Tanni. “Her son -will be disturbed to her staying

in that room with three coffins. If you have a rcx>m for her, 'we can send sedan chairs to take her down.”

Now while ifaey went over the gtounds together, Mukn told Lao Peng and Tanni and Yumei mote of the story of the old woman. Tanni listened excitedly and saw Mulan's quick darting eyes, bright with a pla3dul light of whimsy that Justified all that Poya had said about her. The way she constantly bent her head to one side showed a wayward spirit lurking beneath her outward pattern of conventionality. There is an instinctive reaction during the first meeting of a woman with her fiance's women relatives, a natural chemical repugnance or affinity that could be accounted for only by the higher senses. Tanni felt a thrill as she heard from Mulan an inside story of the Yao femily, told in her stately accent, and with the charm of mannered ease and refinemrat. She had felt no such thrill when she met Paofen and Dimfragrance. Mulah was a true Yao. Tanni knew at once that she adored Mulan, and felt in Mulan a power over her that was close and human and affectionate.

It was evident that Mulan took a great interest in Tanni, not only because Poya's telegram asked her to treat her as a relative, but became she was pleased by this young girl doing charity work on this picturesque hill, and more particularly became she had received a letter from her brother Afei. His letter had told her about Poya's love affeir and about the trouble Tanni was in. While his tone was sympathetic, he had hinted that there might be trouble from Poya's wife.

Mulan was completely surprised now when she saw how Tanni was living among the refugees, and her heart warmed towards her. Mul^ of aU women, had no prejudice against concubines. WHle she talked about the family, Tanni felt dut she was already being treated as a relative.

^^en they came back to the front room, a delayed telegram from Poya hiad come asking Tanni to get in touch with Mulan. After arranging to have Qienma broug& to her house three days later, Mulan said to Tanni , "Come over and stay for lunch. I want to talk with you about certain thing s." Knowing what the meeting might mean for her, Tanni thanked her for her kindness and gladly agreed.

With difficulty Chenma was persuaded to leave the place. On the third day they set out, with the old woman carried in a sedan chair. They made an occasion of it. Lao Peng was returning to his hotel. Yumei was gradually regaining her spirits. Tanni

suggested that she go to Hankow fot a day to see a movie and they took Gold Luck along, not telling him about the movie unt^ they had started. Chenma reluctantly left her new rr^ffif^ behind, after being told that it was in safe keeping there, and that

she co^d not possibly take it into Mulan’s house.

They arrived about ten o’clock at Mulan’s house. It was a small separate house with five or six rooms and a small garden at the back, in the outlying district of Hankow overlooking the Han Rivet. A business district had grown up here and most of the shops and houses were new. Lao Peng went on with the others into the city, and Mulan, wishing to have a private talk with Tanni, did not insist on their staying.

At lunch, Tanni met Mulan’s husband, Sim3?a, and her daughter Amei, a girl of eighteen, besides her son, Atung, who was having a month’s leave ftom the army, after participating in fighting in Anhwei. It was a cosy, small family. ITiey told her that they had left Hangchow at the end of last year and arrived at Hankow iti January, and the four orphans they had picked up on the way were still with them.

Mulan sent a telegram in care of the Eighth Route Army Head-quarters to be transmitted to Chen San. There was no telling how long it would take to reach him, as the chief characteristic of the guerrillas was their extreme mobility. But Atung assured them that the guerrillas had a perfect system of telephonic communica-tion of fheir own; in feet, the whole population of the guerrilla areas acted as their communication lines. It was this system of intelligence that accounted for their great success.

The story of Chenma awakened old memories, and soon the

femily were indulging in reminiscences, while Tanni, as the only outsider, sat and listened. Mulan was telling her children about Sunya’s shyness during their period of engagement.

"Your fether dared not speak a word to me, when I went to his home.”

"Yes, and your mother avoided coming to my home after we were engage^” rejoined Sunya. "How tmngs have chained.”

"I did go to your home. Do you remember when Tijen was ^oing to England, and I went to your home, and you asked me 11 1 was going to England, and your fece went red all over?”

""Who is Tijen?” whisperdd Tanni to Amei, sitting by her side.

“Tijen is my mother’s brother, Poya’s fether,” replied Amei.

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**18 it true. Father? Did you blush to see Mother?” asked Amei.

*'She blushed more than I did,” answered Sunya. “She did herself and would not come out to see me when I went to call on her parents on New Year’s Day.”

Tanni quietly enjoyed the bantering laughter of the fiunily.

Attmg was very attentive to her.

“I heard Mother say you were staying at out Peiping home,”

he said.

Tanni nodded.

‘ ‘■^as the house all right, not occupied by the Japs?”

At last Tanni had a ciance to say something. She told them that the house was all right when she left, and then she was asked questions about their relatives in Shanghai. As the questioners constantly used the terms, "second maternal auntie by marriage” and "second paternal auntie by marriage,” she had a busy time keeping the relationships straight. It was exciting and charming to her to hear these relatives referred to in this way instead of by the form of address used by outsiders, and she felt proud to be the conveyor of news among the Yao and Tseng relatives. It was altogether a heart-warming experience for her.

'TIow was Eldest Sister-in-law;?” asked Amei.

Tanni was confused. “She means Poya’s wife, Kainan,”

explained Mulan, in a sUghtly lower tone. She had told only her husband about the complicated aSbk with Poya, as Afei had told it in his letter to her.

After a moment’s hesitation, Tanni said with a strange smile, **I heard ftom her only a week or so ago.” When no one asked further, her momoitary embarrassment passed, and Mulan began to tell her family about what Tanni was doing at the refugee house, which she described enthusiastically. The slight reserve Tanni had seen on their first meetmg was gone. Mulan still wore her bangs in front, and her hands and fingers moved constantly in pretty gestures.

After lunch, Mulan took Tanni to her own room, where she apologized for the shabby furniture, explaining that she did not know how long they would stey at Hankow. It tras nevertheless a neat little room, with an eastern window looking out on several peach trees already partly in bloom, scenting the air with a subtle fragrance. A desk stood before the window, with several books and albums of calligraphy rubbings spread out upon it, baliicd in the gteen reflected ftom the leaves outside.

Tanni had come in her best gown, the grey worsted with lavender trimmings which Poya had designed for her and which she had not put on since her arrival at Hankow. Below her long sleeves, her jade bracelet showed.

Mulan saw it and asked, “You love jade?”

“Yes. But I put it on when I was yoimg and now I cannot take it off.”

Timidly and still not quite at ease, Tanni turned the pages of the calligraphy album.

“Are you learning the Wei Inscriptions?”

“I look at them when I can. Sometimes I do a fifteen minutes’ exercise after lunch. It is very good for restoring and calming the spirit. Looking at them, one gets back to anoftier world.”

‘‘But I thought mat copying the Wei Inscriptions was only for men, for old retired sdxokrsl”

Mulan smiled and went on. “In my youth I used to admire Qieng Siaoshu’s bold powerful stroke. But later I discarded it. It had too much spirit for me. After all, it is a sensuous type of beauty, all mobility and suppleness of the flesh. Then I went k for the antique, super-sensuous flavour of the Wei Rubbings. But it is a l^der kind of beauty to achieve.

Mulan now began to ask Tanni about the afeir her brother had written about in his letter. “Don’t be afraid of me,” she said, 'T may be able to help you.”

Touched by Mulan’s obvious kindness, Tanni gradually answered a few questions about herself and Poya. Her story of

former connections with traitors intrigued Mulan's interest, and her shy, hesitating tone drew Mulan closer to her. To her immense relief, she found that Mulan did not like Kaioan.

"It is (Micult for a girl in my position. Something always goes wrong. I have a fisar of women."

Mulan smiled a droll smile. "Any woman in love is afraid of other women."

"Yes, but I mean more. I mean the social prejudices of women. They always make me shiver. I know that I have not been a good woman in the usual sense. I have done foolish things in my youth. ..."

"One ought to do some foolish things in youth," said Mulan. "They are what make you feel young and spirited when you think

about them in your quieter old age, I am now over forty. I wish I had committed more youthful foUies to save up for recollections in my later days."

Tanni was surprised and amused by the quizzical smile upon Mulan's lips.

“But you are so diferenti” she almost protested. “You had your feinily.”

“I am not so different as you think. I had romance — suppressed romance. It was so in those days.”

She looked kindly at Tanni. "Miss Peng, you have love, great love.”

Tanni looked up. ‘Tlease call me Tanni. You are the first woman who has had no prejudice against me.”

"How could I, after seeing you? I like girls who have spirit and some romance in them, and who are unusual and not quite women, quite correct. I suppose I got that ftom my fefher.”

“I saw your father’s portrait at your ancestral h^ in Peiping.”

“Yes, he was a great man, and he was a Taoist. A Taoist is a man who has no social prejudices. 1 learned many things ftom my father.”

“You are a very unusual fiimily. You and Poya share the same breadth of mind. That may be what attracted me to him.”

“Yes, there is a strain of romance in our fiunily — all except my sister Mochow.”

To Tanni, this discovery was mote important than her visit to the Yao home. In Peiping she had seen and admired the Prince’s Garden, but now she saw in Mulan a datighter and a spirit of the Yao femily itself. And before she left Mulan’s home she had Mulan’s consent to Pop’s marriage to her.

‘“What will Pop’s other relatives say?” she asked.

“Pop is independent. The others have nothiog to say. He listens only to me,” said Mulan, smiling.

Tanni’s spirit was buoyant as she came to Lao Peng’s hotel. The party had not yet come back from the theatre. Ihe waiter recognized her as Lao Peng’s constant visitor and admitted her to his room. She sat down in an armchair, overcome with the dis-covery of Mulan, happy beyond measure that the frmily had treated her so kindly, ft was such a change from the conventional discrimination, the insulting innuendoes of men and that “look of wives”’ that she had so long kno’wn.

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She -worshipped Mukn. But there -were two secrets that she could not and would not tell Mulan. One was her pregnancy. The other was what had happened to Lao Peng.

When she thought of Lao Peng she fislt tender and very sorry for him. This great-hearted man was now without a question taking himself out of the way as unselfishly as he had offered to protect her name before the word firom Poya came. There had not been even a remote hint of self-sacrifice on his part. Yet she knew. What could she do to repay him, for his unspoken kind-ness? Had she been too confident of his resistance to woman, of the years that separated them? Had she been too affectionate, should she continue to be affectionate, to him? She fervently hoped that after she was rnarried, Lao Peng could remain a part of the femily, as she had always wanted it.

Soon she heard the laughing voices of Gold Luck and Yumei, who came in with Lao Peng.

To make it a holiday for Yumei and Gold Luck they went to a r«taurant for supper. They ordered ftied pepper and steamed tiirde, for which Hankow -was fiimous.

Lao Peng had some news of the war. There had been a great ■victory at Lini in Shantung, cast of Taicrchuang. General Li Tsun^en’s telegraphic report of the victory was printed in newspaper extras which were being sold in the streets.

"Axe you really going up north?” asked Tanni.

**Ye8. Grandma {Chao is going up in about a week. She is

going to the Hopei-Honan border north of the Yellow River.
But a great battle is developing around Hsudbow, and after seeing the guerrillas with Grandma Chao, 1 am goiog there, by the Lunghai Railway.”

'*WU1 you be back when Poya comes? He will arrive in May.” '

**! suppose so.” *

**Unae Peng,<you must. Rjcmember the trouble we had when' you left us and went to Nanking. You will -want to see Poya, and there -will be things happening.” She could not quite say what was in her mind, that the wedding must take place as soon as possible, that there would be awkward things to e-g plain, and a divorce to arrange. She -would need his help, and she -wanted him at her weddmg.

“Of course I sh^ be at your wedding,” said Lao Peng, as if he had read the worried thoughts in her eyes.

She looked up at him udth an e3q>ression of deep gratitude and also of pity, even as the gilt Buddha had looked down upon her.

Upstairs, there was a noise of stamping and hilarious coarse

laughter. Lao Peng looked up at the ceifiig and laughed.

“You remember Ratdesnake?”

‘Tfes, of course,” said Tanni.

“That is Rattlesnake upstairs. We met him on the staircase this afternoon.”

“You wouldn’t know him,” Yumei broke in. ‘‘He was dressed in fuU uniform and was carrying a big cane besides. Uncle Peng recognized him by his voice.”

“He says he is on leave, but nobody knows,” said Lao Peng. “He is a kind of officer now, swaggering as usual, proud as a peacock in his uniform, followed by a soldier, and bellowing right and left at the waiters. He told me a tall story right in the corridor in everybody’s hearing. Yumei, you tell it.”

Yumei was bursting to tell the story. “Nobody knows whether it is true or not. But he is an offirer, that I could see. He said that after the enemy had come back and burned the village at Hosiwu, he led a band of young men and joined the guerrillas. He said when they raided a dty which the Japanese held, he killed them like pigs. When the Japanese counter-attacked, he fought his vray out, killing another thirty or forty single-handed with his big knife. But he didn’t return to his men. *1 just wanted a rest,’ he said. ‘My men took me for dead after a few days, thinking I had been

killed. Killed? Could Lo Tako be lolled so easily? I had merely gone off where I chose. When I returned a week later, I found my men holding a memorial service for me, with candles and a slaughtered pig and sheep. 1 just walked in and said, “Ho, bromers, what are you doing here? Lo Tako is with you here in the flesh.” And my men shouted and made it into a rei feast.* He is with Grandma’s Cbao son, Chao Tung, now. Their bands have grown to flye thousand, and they are in eight districts on the border of Hopei, Honan, and Shansi provinces.”

“It is mcrediblel” said Lao Peng. “He twis drunk this after-noon. You hear how he bellows and carouses in the room upstairs. I don’t know where he gets his money. Still he makes a good fighter.”

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Uobelievable as it seemed, Chen San received the telegraph message about his mother in the mountains of eastern Shansi four days alter Mulan sent it from Hanko-w. His reply came a few days later, expressing great happiness and his urgent desire to see his old mother and rmake up for his sins of filial impiety. He said he was starting at once to come with Huan-erh, “by starry night,” but they were near the Maiden’s Pass, guarding the mountainous border between Hopei and Shansi. Communications were bad,

and there were many enemy soldiers, and it might be ten or twelve days before he could reach the railway. But they would travel by night and day.

On receiving the telegram, Mulan sent word to Lao Peng's hotel. It was me night before his departure for the north, and Tanni and her girl fitiends, Chiuhu and Tuan Wen, had mmo to give him a ferewell patty.

'There is an account available for you at the bank in case you should need money for the refugees' home," Lao Peng told Tanni ' 'And Chiuhu and Miss Tuan, you must visit her as often as you can, to keep her company," he told them for the fourth or fifth time.

"Be sure to write to me," said Tanni. "I shall be worried about you."

"I will," he said, his voice a little sad. "But don't bother to come and see me off to-morrow. I s hall be going with Grandma Chao and her fenuly and I shall be well taken cate of."

But next day they all went to the station, even Wang Tamat^ herself, who said that she could not let their benefector go without a proper fiirewell and she would represent the refugees.

A big noisy crowd had come to see G randma Chao. Dele-

gations ftom student bodies and other organizations had brought loads of cotton shoes and cotton clothing for the guerrillas to go with her. Tanni for the first time saw this old lady. She was over sc^ and looked like any old country woman, but her fece was bright with smiles and her voice rang with the spirit of youth. Tanni was introduced to her son and daughter and was greatly moved when she shook hands with the girl, Lijen, who was going to the ftont.

There was also Rattlesnake, standing on the car platform in his unift>rm, a cigar in his mouth, and still holding a cone, bowing to

everybody and very pleased that so many people had come to see him oS.

A students' brass band played a tone and the atmosphere was tense with excitement. Someone asked Grandma to speak a few words. She went and stood on the car platform, with Rattlesnake standing proudly in his five feet ten above her small figure, drinking in all the glory of this public tribute to their patriotism and service to the country. The Mother of the G uerrillas spoke:

''Brothers and sisters of the same womb, I am an old country woman and know nothing. I cannot read or write. I know only

that Japan wants to destroy our country, and that we must fight Japan. I know that all the common people should love their country, and I am only doing my part as a country woman. My husband is too old. But my son and my two daughters are aU fighting. We in the North-east in Manchuria have a saying, ‘Tear down me house to clear out the mice. Ta Kaa. Do an all-out job.’ I have yet another son; he is too young, only fourteen, otherwise he would come with me, too. I am very much touehed by your gifts. General Chiang has given me a thousand dollars. If we n««d more money or aothing, I will come back to you for it.”

These simple words spoken with cheerful courage by this simple old woman, going to the front at her age, mov^ her hushed hearers and stung some of them to shame. When she finished, a girl leader call^ for cheers for Grandma Chao and for the guerrillas, followed by a great cheer for China’s victory. The Momer of the Guerrillas smiled and nodded to them and turned away into the car.

Rattlesnake, left alone on the car platform, surveyed the audience and cleared his throat and began, “I, your younger brother, also cannot read and write ... eh heml Your younger brother, Lo the Big Brother, your younger brother. . . ,

But his voice was drowned in the commotion, and the circle around the car platform had moved away. Lao Peng said that r Grandma Chao’s son had compelled Ratdesnake to leave Hankow

because he was collecting money for the guerrillas on &lse pretences, , and had greatly misbehaved with women.

The wldstle blew. Lao Peng shook hands with them all. His cheeks were wet and shining, and he swung his tall, bent body into the car without turning round.

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The train began to puli out of the station. Lao Peng’s fa ce appeared at a window. Tanni walked and then ran with the car her eyes wet. ... ’

* *

*

Tanni suddenly realized that she was alone, in spite of Yumei and the others, with a heavy responsibility for the refugees. They went back to the hotel and gathered up a few books and some clothing that Lao Peng had left. Then she sent her companions home in the charge of Qbiuhu and went to see Mulan.

Mulan’s entire family was at home, and she told them of the departure of Mr. Peng and the Mother of the Guerrillas.

And when it was time for her to go, Mulan asked Sunya to accompany her, and asked her daughter Amei to go with So Tanni left with Sunya and Amei. On the ferry they hpar<^ a party of girls singing “For Qiina Carmot Perish.” After the scene at the station, a thrill went down Tanni’s spine when she h^a rd the melody and the words Cbungkm ptdwei wang repeated again and again.

She found Sunya pleasant and easy-going, and she enjoyed talking with Amei, who was a shy, sensitive girl. She took tTiPfn to see the Motaochuan, the “knife-sharpening spring,” which was only a mile ftom the refugee home. This was the place where Kuan Kung in the Three Kingdoms, the most popular soldier-hero of the Qoinese people, and deified as the God of War, sharpened his “Green-Dragon Sleeping-Moon Big Knife,” and near by was a temple to him.

When they arrived at the home, Ghiuhu met them and said, “Pinpin is getting worse.”

“Didn’t the injections do her any good?” asked Tanni, worried.

“I gave her only glucose. There is a new American prepaa-tion, but it costs about twenty dollars a dose.”

“Never mind the cost. We must have it.”

They went in to see the sick child, and Sunya and Amei

followed them in. The Either, Mr. Ku, was sitting by the bedside, shabby and miserable. The dfild's arms and legs were as skinny and gaunt as those of an old invalid. But her fece had grown more spiritual.

"Chiuhu said the fether. "Save my dhild's life, Can

we send her to a hospital?"

Chiiihu shook het head. "She should not be moved at all. And the hospital is not as quiet or as orderly as this place. It is crowded to liniit with wounded soldiers. Here I can come and see her every day, and there is a good medicine, very costly, but Sister Goddess of Mercy has said that she will pay for it."

The fether looked at Tanni, his eyes filled with silent gratitude.

"This child has suffered a lot since our departure. I lost her elder brother. You must save het."

Pinpin smiled at the visitors. Tanni went close to her and held her small, skinny hand with slender fingers, white like oniotis. The small hand lay feeble in Tanni's grasp.

“Do you want to pinch me again?” asked Tanni. For Pinpin had come to treat Tanni almost as her mother. She often played with the bracelet on Tanni’s arm and stared at its green translucent lustre. Once Pinpin had pinched her wrist while Tanni was talking with her &.ther, and Tanni had allowed it So it had developed into a game for the child and an easy way of pleasing her for Tanni.

Pinpin’s hand searched for the bracelet and tried to pinch Tanni again, and smUed happily. But now her fingers were feeble.

“Pinch harder.”

can’t.” Her little fingers relaxed and lay motionless.

“Tell me honestly, am I going to die?”

“Honestly, you ate not. Chiimu ehiehebieb will give you a new medicine, which is like magic. It comes from America.”

“It must be very expensive.”

“It is very esjjensive. That’s why it must be good.”

“How much does it cost?”

- “About twenty dollars each dose.”

“It must be very good medicine then,” said the child quietly.

“But we can’t pay for it”

‘Y'ou must not worry. I will pay for you. I will pay for any-

thing to make Pinpin weU. You want to get weU, don’t you?”

‘Yes, I want to get well and grow up to be like you,” said

the child slowly, word by word. “I stopped at the Eighth

Book of the Reader. I looked at the pictures in the Ninth and

Tenth Books that my elder brother lud at home. He told me

some of the stories, but I want to read them myself. Sister

Goddess of Mercy, there are so many things that 1 want to do,

when I grow up.”

“You mustn’t talk too much now” ■wrhispcred Tanni softly

to her.

^•No, I must tell you what I have in mind. Sistet Goddess of

Mercy, you promised to come to our home when the war is over.

I have planned the dinner. There wiU be wined crabs and our

rhinlriang sioojo and rU kill our biggest chicken. I know where

I will seat you, and my &ther and Pientse and my elder brother

if we find him. There will be five seats on our square table, but I wiU share the same side with you. And I will dress in red and

f)ut a jasmine in my hair in your honour. And we shall sit and ook at the sunset. The sunset is always glorious there."

The child found sudden strength to say these things because they lay in her heart, and now she lay panting, her spiritual eyes seeing vividly many things that were not visible to the others.

"I will come to your dinner. But you must rest very quietly. To-morrow the new American medicine will come."

"You pay for me first, for I want to live. I'll repay you when I grow up, I will."

Tanni bit her lips hard.

"You are crying," said the child. "Why are you crying. Sister Goddess of Mercy?"

Tanni wiped her eyes and smiled. "Because I love you and am happy for you. The new medicine will do you good."

*T have told you what I want to do. Now I will sleep."
Pinpin's eyes closed. When her big deep eyes were open they seemed to be the whole of her fiice so that one saw nothing else. But now her nose, sharp and pointed, stood out high above her

sallow cheeks, breathing audibly the breath that kept the spark of life glowing. Once she coughed painfully and her big eyes opened, and Tanni bent and patted her and closed her eyes again with her hand.

The next day CMuhu brought the new medicine that had come seven thousand miles across the sea feom a country which Pinpin had only heard about at school. It worked like magic, and after three days, her appetite improved, she felt less listless and enervated, and her strength began gradually to return.

* *

3|e

Now on the seventh day after Lao Peng's departure^ the Japanese once more bombed Hankow and Wuchang. It had been

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mote than a month since the last ait taid ovet Hankow. In the annals of the China Wat the taid of Match the twenty-seventh over Hankow was but one of the thousands of ait raids. Poya’s statistics might show it as “A.R. No. 329” ot “561.” But human events are not as simple as statistics. This taid, ordinary as it was, and probably already forgotten by most of the citizens of Hankow,

worked a change in the lives of Tanni, Lao Peng, and Poya. Human life is incredibly complex. A few bombs manu&ctured in Osaka, flown by American oil, and dropped ovet a clump of rocks in Wuchang profoundly afected a middle-aged man who was now five hundred miles away in Honan and a young man a thousand miles away on the road to Kunming, as we shall see later.

That March day some children came in to report that the alarm signal had been hoisted on the river bank, and soon a long sken confirmed it. As usual, the people prepared to go into the woods behind. Piapin’s &ther was always the first to get his duldren away.

"What about Pinpin?” he asked Chiuhu.

"She must not move.”

The fether, though nervous himself, decided to stay through the taid with his sick daughter.

At about two o^clock, seventy enemy planes came m several waves. As the anti-aiccaraft guns were hurhng an intensive fire into the sky, the planes kept above four thousand metres and dropped several hundred bombs on Hankow and Wuchang, hitting the South Lake and the Hsuchiapeng and Yuchiatou districts, destroying houses and killing many people.

One bomb land^ on Hungshan fifiy yards down the slope, so near that the whole house shook and tte glass in the windows was shattered. The explosion was so great that a big roc:k was blown apart and a chip forty or fifty pounds in weight flew up and hit a corner of the roof and landed on the stone yard within.

Pinpin was cowering in her bed, her &ther stopping her ears with ms hands, when £e rock crashed through the roof and sent the plaster down filling the air with thick, choking dust.

By an old instinct, Ku clutched his daughter in his arms and tan through the falling rafters and the blinding dust into the open and made for the woods. His legs were shaking and he stumbled as he went up the earthen steps, his body fallTng on top of the

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daughter’s body, but his arms still holding her tightly. SWly he got to his feet and carried the diild into the woods.

A tall column of dust still hung in the air, rising from where the bomb had feUen, and another smaller column rose from the roof of the house.

‘‘What has happened?” shouted the people.

Mr. Ku, carryiig the sick child in his weak arms, shuflBing and shaking, was too upset to speak. Silence struck the company.

“Is Pinpin hurt?” asked Tanni, forcing a note of calm in her voice.

“No.” He laid the child down on the ground, panting with fear and exertion. His face was pale, but paler was the child’s, although she was dead silent. Chiuhu came and felt her
The child’s eyes dilated with terror. Qbiiuhu and Tanni sat on the grass and tried tb calm her.

"Where’s Pientse?” asked Pinpin about her younger brother.

“He is s^e,” they told her.

The planes were still roaring overhead and the distant and-airaaft guns were filling the sky with a continuous boom that echoed over the valley. No one dared to move. Now Ku found words to speak. “Something hit our house with a terrific bang and the roof crashed down. I picked up Pinpin and ran.”

Then Wang Tamaag ventured to go into the house, and returned with the report that only a few rafters had feUen down, and that a rock the size of a man’s hat had crashed on the yard, splitting the slabs. The ground was strewn with dust and broken glass.

“It is lucky that no one is hurt,” she remarked.

They sat and waited for an hour, with Tanni holding Pinpin’s hand. Suddenly Pinpin began to cough, and a stream of blood oozed ftom her mouth, colouring the grass. Then she lay back, breathing noisily.

When the planes were gone and the all-dear signal was sounded, Mr. Ku, who was really a very weak person, said, ‘1 dare not carry her again.”

So Chiuhu and Yumei carried her, slowly step by step down the slope, and back to her ftther’s bed.

The people’s hearts stiU fluttered. A sense of tension was in the house. Pinpin, now laid comfortably in bed, dozi;d o£^ unconsdous.

Taoni and Chiiihu sat with Pinptn's fiither, hoping that she wotild go off into a quiet sleep. But her hands constantly twitched nervously and her eyes opened again.

“Tieb, I shall leave you now. I just saw [nay elder brother].

I know. . . .”

But before she went further, another thick stream of blood overflowed and oozed firom the comers of her mniith, staining the bedclothes. She wanted to sit up so as to cough better, but she was too weak and had to be bolstered up. But in a second her body relaxed and she was gently laid down again. She lay motionless .there. Some tears trickled from her closed eyes.

This kept on for tiie greater part of that aftemooa Tanni sat through hours of agony, feeing death itself but refusing acceptance of it. The child’s nervous twitches would cease for a quarter of an hour and start again. Quuhu gave her a slight dose of morphine. Pientse was kept away from the room, and the three sat speechlessly, watching the silent, dramatic stmggle between life and death in the sleeping duld.

Then, as the day darkened and dusk crept by towards the supper hour, the child woke once and asked, ‘'^^y is it so dark?” And they lighted some extra candles to brighten the room.

Presently Tanni saw her lips move. She wanted to say something. Tanni held the candle dose to her fece. Her eyes opened, but the light in them was remote and unearthly. She spoke her words very slowly, one by one, her gaze travelling around the company:

“What ate these people doing here? We are all gtiests here. Our home ,is not here, but down the Yangtse. . . . Don’t cry. Sister Goddess of Mercy. When the war is over, we shall all go home. I have yet to study the Ninth Reader.”

Her eyes dosed again. After a while, they opened again, and this time she seem^ to recognize the persons and her mind seemed dearer. To her fether, she said, *‘Tieb, I am leaving you now.. Don’t weep for me. Take care of Pientse. Where is he?”

Chiuhu went to get the younger brother, and when he came ha, Pinpin’s hands groped for his.

“Be a good boy, titi” she said. “The Sister Goddess of Mercy will teach you the multiplication table.”

Pientse stood motionless and speechless, not understanding death. Then she asked for mote light.

"Sister Goddess of Mercy, let me look at your face.”

Taoni Held the candle dose to her own fece, so that the chilj might see it.

^e child looked at her, smiled and then dosed her eyes,
saying, “Cbiehebieh, you are beautiful. ...” ’

A slow line of blood trickled intermittently out of her mouth,
but it was thin and the volume was small, and she was no longer
consdous of it. A few minutes later, her breath stopped. Her
little life flickered and went out like a small candle light. A white
handkerchief hanging across the window swayed in the
Pinpin passed into eternity.

Slowly rdeasing the child’s hand, Tanni felt a sorrow so deep
that it found no tears. Because she had been so very dose to her
and knew the many things the child had platmed to do, the
febulous, little things, like finishing her school and playing host
to Tanni at her Chinkiang home, which she now had left undone
and which could never come to pass now, her death was to her
like the crushing of a flower by a merdless storm, or like the
vanishing of an uncompleted dream. For Pinpin, too, was a leaf
in the storm, a small leaf tom adrift on its young journey through
the world and now dancing away alone, even a little gaily. Of
these millions of leaves swept by the storm, some were luckier
than others, and a mere acddent, a senseless flying rockj had
crushed the young'life of this one, so full of hope and of longing
for the beautiful, so willing to play the game. Wayfarers’ feet
shall tread upon it, and the scavenger sh^ sweep it aside, little
knowing that there was in it so much of beauty and courage and
decent respect for the laws of living.

"Poor child, she suffered much after we left home, and she never complained," said the fether, and he brpke into tears. And Tanni could no longer restrain herself and wept aloud with the father.

It was already dark, but Wang Tamang came in and said that she would go down to the dty and buy a coffin. The fether was penniless, and all the costs h<id to come from Tanni's own purse. So Wang Tamfmg went off to the dty, with Gold Luck who went along to carry a lantern, and returned at nine, saying that the coflBn would be delivered in the morning. Pinpin had no new clothes, and her body was bathed and dressed again as she was, in a feded blue jacket and trousers. But Wang Tanumg combed

her hail and put a camellia in it that the child had loved. Candles ■were lighted, and there was sound' of mourning in the house, but Pientse did not know enough to cry. The fether sat through half the night, while Tanni, overcome and eahausted with grief, retired to bed with Chiuhu.

Early the next morning the cofiin came. Some villagers offered to dig a grave not fer from the back of the house, the coffin Tanni laid the tattered and dog-eared Eighth Reader that had come with Pinpin on her migration journey and the piece of

string with which they had played cat’s-cradle. A bright, mild sun shone ironically on the group standing above the child’s grave. Seeing Tanni weep, even more than the &ther, the women wept also, for weeping was contagious, and so, altiiough there was not much ceremony, the dead child received a warm tribute ftom her friends and neighbours. Wang Tamang said to her neighbours, 'TTae child has died a worthy death, having so many tears shed over her. Sister Goddess of Mercy is really a good-hearted person.”

The burial was done before ten o’clock, but all through the day Tanni sat listless, forgetting everything else. Even the room where &e rock had crashed ttucough was left in its ^sorder.

“If she had been sleeping in her fether’s room, instead of in that eastern room, she might not have received such a Bright and she would not have.dicd,” said Tanni, lying in her bed, stiU thinking.

“Calm your sorrow,” said Yumei. “Who could know that the rock would hit that room?”

But the causality of events is such that every little happening is conditioned by a thousand antecedents. The author of the Buddhist theory of Karma must have observed some such cause-and-effect relationship between remote events. If Lao Peng had not gone away, Pinpin would not have been moved into that room. And Lao Peng’s going away was infiuenced by many other

causes, including Tanni’s pregnancy and the promise of marriage, which affected their relationship to one anotber. But it would be simpler to say that Pinpin would not have died if there had been no war started by a group of empire-dreamers across the sea, who never knew her. And if Pinpin had not died, Ta nni might not have gone to the war ftont later.

Lao Peng, was right. On that day the newspapers reported that

shoulders. T anni smiled heartily and apologized for being aslo^ ^ when they came, but her face was pale and thin. Mulan looked at her in the light of what she had learned from Yumei a few tnimn-*; ago, and so, as she spoke, her voice was deep and quiet and restrained.

"The bombing must have quite shaken you up. How is it that Peng Laoyeb has gone up and left you in charge of this pkce?”

"He wanted to see the war and the guerrillas. He went up with Grandma Chao — oh, I don’t know. . . She finished with a worried sigh.

“You need a rest, Tanni. What do you think of coming to my house for a few days’ test?”

Stifling her exultant surprise, Tanni said, "But I have to manage this house.”

Eventually Mulan persuaded Tanni over her easily overcome resistance to leave the house and come to stay with her for a few days. When Wang Tatnang was called in, she readily agreed to relieve Tanni for a few days and said that she and Yumei could easily look after the place. Gold Luck could carry messages to Mulan’s house, and Brocade said her son, Litdc Pie, could also run errands. Tanni left that very afternoon with Mulan and ter daughter. .

Tliose were four wonderful days that Tanni spent at Mulan’s home. Always at the back of her mind was the death of Pinpin. She was not in a mood to welcome the advent of Spring this year, but Spring had a secret magic power to make her cordial, besides stirring an unrest in her soul. Everywhere its breath was in the air, coaxing tiny buds to come out without fear, caressing the mountain azaleas into a reckless abandon of self-^splay, urging the peaches and chiding^ the pktms, and brushing the golden hair of weeping willows in soft, long strokes. It was as if a painter had dippM his brush and covered the Wu-Han landscape generoi^y with a pale yellowish-green, and then added thicket dabs of pink and red here and there. People coming back ftom the country were seen carrying through the streets long, heavily* laden branches of mountain azalea.

, Tanni was glad to be back in the city once more, living so close td the busy streets. Living with Mulan’s family was easy and without much constraint, and she came to know the femily quite well. Never once did Mulan let her know that she knew her

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condition, and Tanni would never have had her suspect it. She wore her loose-fitting gowns which she had worn up on the hill. But sometimes when she was sitting quietly in the room, Mulan could see a distant expression in her eyes.

A telegram had come ftom Poya announcing his a r ri val at Kunming, where he was going to stay for two weeks. Without Tanni’s knowledge, telegrams were sent to and ftom Kunming. One day when Sunya was going out to send a telegram, Tanni heard about it and asked him what he was doing. Sunya replied that he was sending a telegram to Kunming and merely sn^ed.

“But to whom?” asked Tanni a little anxiously.

“To Poya, of course.”

Tanni blushed and saifl ho more. Another day she heard that a telegram was despatdied to Shanghai.

“Wbat are all Aese mysterious telegrams? Do they have something to do with me?” Tanni asked Mulan.

Mulan cast a playful, quizzical look at her and said, “There’s a plot in the Yao family. You don’t have to know.” After a brief pause, she said, looking at Tanni out of the comers of her long eyes, “What do you think of my daughter?”

‘T like her, of course.”

“I mean, what do you think of her as a bridesmaid?”

Tanni flushed a litde. '*1 don’t understand.”

‘T mean for her cousin’s wedding. They are cousins, you know.”

"Which cousin?” Tanni had guessed, but simulated innocence to cover up her excitement, while casting an exasperated look at Mulan.

“Can’t you guess? We have to think of your wedding.” Mulan finally broke the news to her with a teasing, scintillating smile.

The word "wedding^’ held a magic power for Tanni. She looked as if she had been struck dumb. Her throat was tight with happiness, and her fece was flooded with a light of gratitude.

“Oh, Mrs. Tseng ” she said with glistening eyes.

“Are you still calling me Mrs. Tseng? I’ll soon be Poyu’s ’guardian’ at the wedding. I meant to surprise you. These thtoigs ought to be plotted behmd the bride’s back, but I didn’t want to keep you too long in suspense.”

“But is it all so simple? His wife — and all that?”

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“It is being arranged. Afei is handling it. Isn’t it time for you to thank yonr aunt?”

Tanni burst into happy tears. “I don’t know how to find words for my thanks,” she said.

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Worried about the house on Hungshan, Tanni went back on the fourth day. The visit with Mulan had done much to restore her spirit, but when she came back, she was struck with a sense of desolation. The house was tunning by itself. But Lao Peng

and Pinpin were gone. When would Lao Peng return, and w^ was going to happen to this place? She had a sense of calamity, of someiimg about to happen to Lao Peng. The mote she thought of ms departure, the more she became convinced that she had driven him to s^-exile. She did not merely miss him; now in his absence, the great qualities of this man became to her. The memory of seeing him drunk and alone in his hotel room constantly came back to her and made her ill at ease. Perhaps now he was suffering alone in some hotel. When she happened to step into his room and saw his bed and the bundle of his clothing, she felt very tender towards him and was with a sense of self-reproach. When Poya's telegram and letter came, she had never even stopped to consider whether her obligation to Lao Peng was at an end. Like herself, he had tat-on it for granted and had simply gone away. This sacrifice on his part touched her more deeply even than his offer to be fethpi- to her diild.

She tried to picture Poya's return and her wedding. She ought to be happy and she was not. Yes, she was to be married to Poya;, he was young and handsome and wealthy, and she would have a comfortable home like Mulan's. But how much did she know of Poya? He would design dresses for her and parade her about, and she would live a life of entertainer to him. She felt a sudden revul- sion. The love that she had enjoyed and shared withhimatShaag- hai could not satisfy her now. The shock on that ni ght at the dance hall had left a permanent rnark upon her, making the mere love of the senses distastefiil. She saw herself turning, naked, on

the Wheel of Kama . . . . Was she again to wear the brassihre . . .?

She tried to talk with Yumei, although she did not tell her about what Mukn was planning.

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‘ ‘Didn’t you promise to marry Uncle Peng?” said Yumei.

"Wc have decided not to be married.”

“Tsenmo? You have jilted him? You are jilting that good manl”

Tanni tried very hard to quiet her conscience. She went to see Pinpin’s fether, but there was nothing to be said between them. She remembered Pinpin’s wish and started to teach her brother the multiplication table ficom the multiples of eight. "Two times eight art sixteen . . .”

But Pinpin’s voice came back and she could not go on. Pientsc refused to learn any more, now that his sister v^s dead. It had ceased to be a game between two children, and had become only a process of perfunctory learning.

Sometimes during the night, Tanni would heat the muffled mourning of Ku for his lost daughter Pinpin, and the sound was hard to b^ in the dark night on the hill. The place became insufferable for her. Suddenly she teali2ed that every time Lao Peng left her, she got into trouble. If Lao Peng wctc here now, the house would become cheerful again.

On the same day there came Poya's first letter ftom Kunming, by air mail , and one ftom Lao Peng from Qiengchow. To her own surprise, Tanni opened Lao Peng's letter mst. When she had read through both, she realized why. Ftom Poya's previous letters she had learned what to espect: the enumeration of moim-tains and rivers with strange names, the altitudes of different peaks, the references to gorgeous scenery, awesome cliffs, watersheds, hairpin curves, left her strangely cold. She could not read Poya's letter a second tiroe, but she re-read Lao Peng's again and again. It gave her a sense of familiarity and partnership that was warm and human. He spoke of Yumei and Wang Tanuo^ and Pinpin, of whose death he had not heard, and he rebuked her a litde for having neglected Yueh-o, the ugly listl^ girl who had been to a Christian school. He said almost nothing about hims elf, except that he had come back ftom the region north of the Yellow River.

She furtiher surprised herself by taking a new interest after that in Yueh-o because it was lao Peng's wish. And as days drew by she fotmd that this girl whom she Imd passed almost unnoticed had something to teach her. To please her, she read a little in the

Christian Bible which Yueh-o had. One passage she read was this:

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Tl/is is my eommandmmf, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay dom his life
bis friends.

The wotds made hei t hink again of Lao Peng, and the wotd
“love” took on a new meaning in her quick mind.

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War fever had seized the population of Hankow. Day by day,
from Matdi aSth to April yth, tmbelievable news of a great
victory came from the faront. For the first time in history, the
Chineise Army had met the Japanese Army on the field and
crushed it by superior tactics.

The promised April offensive was bearing surprising results.
The city was electrified and humming with news of trapping and
annihilation of the enemy. A great battle had started on the plains
around Taierchuang on March 24th and continued to rage for a

fortnight. It was the bitterest fighting since the Shanghai Wat. The enemy had sent a hundred thousand soldiers, induding the famous Fifth and Tenth Divisions from Shantung, converging towards the great railway jimction of Hsuchow in three direc-tions from the north. Their left column approaching firom the east had suffered a crushing defeat at Lini on the fifteenth, at the hands of Generals Qiang and Pang, which laid the basis for the later victory. Two main columns came down the Tientsin-Pukow Railway. Before the railway reached Hsuchow, there was a btandi line forming a l(K>p to the east, so that it resembled the letter b with the two lower points resting on the Lunghai Railway which runs east and west. The straight line of the h represents the Tientsin-Pukow, with Hsuchow at the lower end. The curved line brandies off eastward and curves down towards Taierchuang, on the north bank of the Grand Canal, which runs horizontally across through the two legs of the h. Three great lakes lie west of the Tientsin-Pukow Railway, along the entire length of Ae straight line. One enemy column came down the straight line and reached Hanchuang, which is also on the north of the Grand Canal. As the terrain here rises into high hills, the enemy did not attempt to cross the Canal. The main central column stru<h east ficom Lincheng and followed the curved branch line, aimin g at the capture of Taierchuang. Such tactics might be regarded as

technically sound, since the flat country around Taierchuang offered an easier roundabout approach to Hsuchow. Control of it would both cut off the Chinese right flank and enable the enemy’s left flank to effect a junction with the main column.

But tacticians lay out the plan, while it is the soldiers who must fight the battle. The Chinese allowed the enemy central mlnmn to penetrate as far as the north-eastern and eastern suburbs of Taierchuang. The enemy reached the city gate on March 28th, and for a week the batde raged with street fighting ingt'd^ the town, and shifted back and forth in the eastern and nnf t^hpfn suburbs. For a time, the Chinese were forced back to the south bank of the Canal, and then they recrossed it and recaptured the outlying villages. But while the centre, under General Tang Enpo, held stubbornly against the enemy’s fiercest attack, the Chinese right and left flanJb were quietly executing an enveloping movement. The left flank crossed the Canal and the lakes on the west in the face of the most intense enemy fire and cut off the Tientsin-Pukow Railway and its bridges at many points along sixty miles all the way from Tai-an. Eight hundred volunteers came forward, when three hundred were asked for, to form a suicide squad, and they captured by hand-grenade fi ghtin g the Skunk-Head Hill (Changtoushan) immediately north of Taier-chuang, cutting it off from reinforcements and bottling up the enemy at Yihsien on the north. By March 30th the encirclement was almost complete, and the enemy found itself io a desperate position, with its food and ammunition dwindling. The gruesome fighting had already caused fifteen thousand enemy casualties,

three-quarters of the cornered force. Reinforcements from the east were rushed desperately to the rescue, threatening from behind the Chinese fighting at Lanling, north of Taierchuang. But the Chinese tight flank, under General Chang Tsechung, hotly pursued this force, and on April 5rd swiftly struck and decisively ■'yiped out the enemy at Lanling, removing the menace.

The outer encirclement was now complete. When the Chinese opened the third counter-offensive on April 5th, the enemy was already in a tight death-trap. Only a few hundred men were still holding the northern comer of the town, their ammunition almost spent. Meanwhile, tihe Chinese encirclement steadily pressed in to Nanlo, Liuchiahu, and Cbmglou a few miles outside the walled town. On the night of the sixth, the few hundred remnants took

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flight in dismal confusion, but were intercepted and wiped out at the northern village. The morning of the seventh saw the enemy flp f in g northward to escape. Of the twenty thousand Japanese engaged in these battles, hardly three thousand escaped alive, and they fled in such a hurry that they had no time to bury their dead, or carry away their wounded.

Day by day the news of the enemy’s crushing defeats, enormous casualties, the trapping of troops and the recapture of towns around Taierchuang, had built up a crescendo of expectations. When it reached a climax with the news of the enemy’s igno-minious retreat, Hankow became a jubilee city. The first historic victory over Japan had been promised and delivered.

On April yth, Wuchang was in uproar. At early dawn, fitfr crackers began to rend the air. At half-past seven, Miss Tuan ramp to the refugee home like a mad person, bringing the news of the victory which she had heard by radio late the night before. Chiuhu had been staying overnight with Tanni. The news excited old and young. The boys took a kerosene can and dashed down the hill beating it. A din of gongs, drums, and fire-crackers ramp up from the valley. By trine o’clock, the noise of fir^ crackers had Income a steady uninterrupted tattle. Besides the continuous grape-fire of ‘'whip fire-crackers,” there were tie explosions of “sky-and-earth fire-crackers,” a boom on the ground followed by a crack in the air.

“To Ha^ow!” cried out the three girls.

‘T’m going to get drunk,” Chiuhu declared.

all the refugees wanteti to go down the hill and join the holicky-makers in the city. It was not necessary for the Government to declare a holiday. The holiday declared itsdf.

No students attended classes, lltoployees did not go to thek work. A milling , swirling crowd filled the streets and gathered in the squares. Boys beat sections of bamboo, kettles, cymbals, and brass table-tops, anything that would serve for a gong. It was unorganized, spontaneous, noisy, disorderly, and sentimental, as it should be.

Tuan Wen had come in her overalls, and this suggested to Tarmi and Chiuhu that they should get into overalls, too, for greater ease in marching. Ta nni tied a bright red scarf around her head, and the three of them went down the hill and across the river, and tramped the streets, their arms across each other’s shoulders.

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Printed paper flags \srere being sold for twenty-five cents. Women and children came out swathed in green and blue and red. A brass band went marching through the streets.

Chiang Kaishek issued a proclamation of great dignity, addressed to all oflScers and soldiers of the Qiinese Army, m party offices, provincial and local governments, and all the people of Giina:

Since the outbreak of the war, several provinces have feUen to the enemy, and the seat of the National Government has been

moved. Tht sacrifices of the officers and soldiers have been great and the hardships that have be&llen our people of the same womb have been calamitous. Surveying the past and looking forward to the future, we can only feel the magnitude of the task set before us. The recent victory at Taierchuang, won through the heroic struggle of our soldiers and officers and the support of the people in the rear, constitutes only a preliminary victory on the field. It serves only to satisfy a little the hopes of the entire nation in the last eight months, and to make up a little for the sufferings and hardships which our nation has been compelled to endure. But it is not worthy of a celebration. The end is not yet and our hardest task lies before us. Our civilians and our Army should, particularly at this moment, eschew vain conceit and harness themselves for the great struggle ahead. Only those who are not haughty at the moment of triumph will hold their heads up during temporary setbacks. We should strive all the harder and make still greater efforts, without wavering and without slackening. With a long-range view of the struggle ahead, we should re-dedicate ourselves to a life of silent, calm heroism, no one shirking hardships and everyone doing his duties towards the nation, that we may fight to the bitter finish and accomplish the goal of victory we have set for purselves. It is my hope that the nation will realize with me this national aim and stimulate each other to greater efbrts. Yaag (the seventh day),

Chiang Kaishek.

But in spite of Chiang’s proclamation, the celebrations went on.

After lunch the tiiree girls went to see Mulan, who was completely tftkftn by surprise by their appearance and their irresponsible gaiety. Tanni was in her overalls, her white smiling

fece set dflf by the ted scarf. But the one most affected by the young ftiends was Mulan's own daughter, Amei.

"(5me out with us. Dress like usl" said Tanni, impulsively.

"Mother, may I?" asked Amei. Since her sister's Jq j political demonstration in Peiping years ago, her mother had kept the shy and sensitive girl away from public processions, and had a litde over-protected her. But to-day Mulan not only consented to have her go out, but also wished that she be dressed like the others. Atung went out to a shop to get overalls for his sister and Mulan wrapped a bright lavender scarf around her and neck, in pleasant contrast with her green blouse.

The four girls spent all afternoon wandering the streets, attracting some attention with their gay attire and their effervescent laughter. It was a Saturday afternoon, and the streets were still full, although the noise of fire-crackers had eased a little. They learned that there was to be a lantern and torchlight procession that night, and that different organizations of workers, students, soldiers, and govermnent personnel were going to

march. And they saw a notice posted calling for volunteers from the .War-Area Service Corps to go to Hsudxow and bring Mrat orphans out of the war area.

Tuan Wen said, “I am going to volunteer.”

Mulan had asked the girls to come back for supper, and afterwards the whole femily went out with Tanni and Chiuhu, while Tuan Wen went to join her corps in the procession. Banners, lanterns, torches, brass bands, and uniformed groups shouting war slogans, passed in a continuous stream, and an unorganized procession of^holiday-makers marched beside them. When Tuan Wen’s corps passed, Tanni dragged Chiuhu and Amei with hci and the three girls went laughing and capering down the street arm in arm, for ten blocks. Then they broke away and brougjht Amei home,' and took Tuan Wen with them.

Mulan’s frmily had already returned. When Tanni came in, Mulan was excitedly reading to Chp-nma a telegram which had just come from her son.

She turned to Tanni. “A telegram from Chen San has just come from Chengchow. He is to arrive in two days. And he says that your Mr. Peng is ill in bed.”

Tanni’s free dropped its gay look, and Mulan saw the anxietj oh her free. In a fraction of a second, her mind was made up. '

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She turned to Tuan Wen. "Can I go np north ■with your corps?”
she asked.

“I don’t know. Are you serious?” replied Tuan Wen.

“Of course.”

‘Tt may be dangerous,” said Mulan. "Do you think you can
stand it?”

“Li'ving in a war area is hard,” Atung warned.

"But we have won the victory already. The Japs ate retreating.
I want to see the battle front.”

As the three girls returned to Wuchang at about midnight,
Tanni was silent. The news of Lao Peng’s illness had come as an
anti-climax to a day of buoyant gaiety. Lying in bed when aU was
quiet again, she began to thiak. She had been selfishly enjoying
herself, while Lao Peng was suffering alone and ill in Chengchow.

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Two days later, Chen San and Huan-erh arrived. Sunya and Atung went to meet them at the station, while the women stayed at home and prepared the welcome. Tanni, anxious for news of Lao Peng, had come over. Chen San’s mother was wearing the new silk dress which she had made Lao Peng buy for her in expectation of her end. The train had been delayed and the men did not come until almost supper-time. For two whole hours Chenma kept going out to stand at the door. She came in and went out so often that Mulan ■was afraid that the excitement of the meeting would be too great for her old body. She was only a litde more than sixty, but it was evident that her strength ■was almost gone. Only the expectation of her son’s return bore her up, and she was stubbornly holding on, living on borrowed time, as it were.

"Come in and rest yourself,” said Mulan. **¥0™: eyes cannot see very Sax anyway. When your son and daughter-in-law arrive, you must look your best, calmly seated.”

She ■was persuaded then to seat herself in a low chair in the of the hall, ftcing the ftont door. She began to talk again of the rimft when her son had disappeared, when he ■was only sixteen. *T can see him as a litde boy. And I can still remember his voice, But.what can I give him? What can I give him now?”

At last Atung dashed in. "They are herel”

Mulan went and stood beside the old woman. In a moment

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Chan San came running in, followed by Huan-eth. Recognizim his mother by her special position in the chair, Oien San fell^ his knees, and resting his arms on her knees, he wept aloud and Huan-erh fell on her knees, too, beside him, ’

With teats streaming down her cheeks, the old woman’s han^^ s felt her son’s hair and his bent head buried in her lap, groping and grasping his wide shoulders. Unable to say a word, she b^ over and smelled him as if he were still her little boy, gently, as if pouting her ebbing life into his hair, his head, his e^s. Then the mother and the son reached for each other’s bands and held them in a tight grasp.

Chen San lifted his mother’s hands and kissed them. "0 mother, your unfilial son has returned.”

“My son, stand up. Let me look at you,” she said at last. He stood and said, “Here is your daughter-in-law.” Huan-eth was still kneeling.

“Come, let me look at you,” said Chenma.

Only then did Huan-erh stand up.

“Huan-erh, I know you well. You are a good girl and you ate a good ‘daughter-in-law’ for my son. How is your mother?” Her voice was strangely clear.

“She is dead.”

“And how is your sister-in-law, Mochow?”

“She is in Chungking now with her husband.”

Now Huan-erh pulled up two low stools and she and Chen San' sat close before their mother, and Chen San began to teU of his return to the Yao femily and how he had been iiie

whole femily had come in and filled the room, watdbung the reunion of mother and son.

But, after a while, as Chan San went on teUing the story, the mother’s eyes closed and her head drooped to one side. The >ian/t that lay in his palm relaxed, senseless.

Sunya came over and looked at her and lifted the son up and saidgMtljr,“Itisherend. Do not feel too bitter. She had been expecting it long before you came. Now she has died with her wish fulfilled.”

But Ch^ San fell wailing upon his mother’s body, as a son should do, and beat his chest and sobbed and would not be comforted. “I have not even the chance to hear 'how she lived the last years of her life,” he wept.

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“The main thing is that she dies happy and contented,” said Huan-erh, to comfort her husband.

“She has been able to live in peace during her last days,” said Mulan. “And for that you ought to thank Tanni.”

Mulan told him how his mother was found and cared for, and how she had bought her cofBn already. Chen San thanked Tanni formally and pronely, addressing her as Miss Peng, and saying that he had met Lao Peng a year before. And Chen San now carried his mother’s small body and laid her in a side room, and Huan-erh followed him. There, secretly, he kissed his mother’s face for a long time, bathing it with his own tears, until Huan-erh lifted him up.

A lavish dinner had been prepared for their welcome, but now they served only a few of the dishes. Mulan urged. Chen San to eat, and although he should not eat too much, he was ravenously hungry and filled himself with rice.

After supper, Tanni gave him the padrage of three hundred dollars that his mother had left, and explained, “Your mother said that these are the savings of her lifetime, and that she had saved them, coin by com, copper by copper, for you. Mr. Peng gave the package to me when he left.”

**But who paid for the coffin?”

“Mr. Peng did. Some of these are old notes, worthless now. You had better keep them as a souvenir of your, mother.”

As Chen San’s eyes fell upon the paper parcel — symbol of his mother’s lifislong, unceasing love — ^tears welled for& in his eyes again.

Then Tanni asked him about Lao Peng, and Chen San told her how they had met on the train coming down to Cheng-chow. Lao Peng had caught a cold in northern Honan, and was travelling alone. Chen San had helped him to a hotel, but in his urgent desire to see his mother, had had to leave him the next day.

Now Tanni’s min d was wholly made up. She must go to Lao Peng to comfort him in his solitude and sickness. It was the least she could do in return for his great kindness to her and to so many others.

The next day, Chen San went early to Hungshan with Huan-erh and Tanni, accompanied by Brocade’s husband, to get the coffin. The burial ceremonies were gone through the

foUowing day, and Chen San and Huan-eth stayed in Mulan’s home and went into mourning.

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To Tanni’s great disappointment, Tuan Wen came the nott evening to tell her that Acre were too many volunteers anxious to see the scene of the victory. The first seven girls had already been selected and Miss Tuan had been left out. Besides the Wat-Area Service Corps, members of many different organizations were competing for the chance to go, to take gifts to die soldiers in the field, and many reporters were leaving to get first-hand stories from the officers and soldiers.

The story of the battle began to be pieced together. On March 28th the Japanese artillery had made breaches in the north-eastern wall of Taierchuang, which was made of mud bricks and unusually thick like an ancient robbers’ stronghold, but with gun emplacements. From that day on till April 5th, there had been street fighting with the Chinese rigidly holding the enemy to

the north-eastern and north-western corners of the city. Every day mote Japanese forces would come in under cover of shell-fire, only to be wiped out again each night, for the Japanese seemed to be particularly inept in close-quarters combat at night. Sometimes whole rows of the enemies' heads would be chopped off by Chinese big knives in the dark. Fighting often took place on either side of a house wall, with both sides trymg to use the same holes bored through ffie wall. Once when a Japanese had stuck a bayonet into the Chinese side, a Chinese soldier had seized the bayonet and held it tightly while his comrade went round the wall and threw a hand grenade at the enemy. The Chinese set fire to the Japanese block-houses, while the Japanese set fire to their own houses at night for fear of being attacked in the dark. For fourteen days the Chinese stood a hail of sheU-fire from enemy field guns and heavy artillery. Not a house was left intact. Outside, the eastern suburb was transformed into a blood bath. Better Chinese equipment had played a part, with the arrival of Russian light tanks and German anti-tank guns. Seventeen enemy tanks had roUed towards the city on the twenty-seventh, but a Chinese artillery unit had arrived the previous afternoon, and to the enemy's surprise, ten tanks were turned away before they reached the suburb, and of the seven that came up to the city's defences, six were easily demolished by the German anti-tank guns. Two, less badly injured, were towed away, but four crippled tanks remained as objects of curiosity for the Chinese

soldiers. Towards the last, the enemy was using aeroplanes to transport supplies of ammunition. \STien their last ammunition dump was blown up and their encirclement complete, the Japanese on the outer defences beat a hasty retreat.

Tanni had sent a telegram to Lao Peng, and three days later a letter came, sayring that his sickness was nothing and she was not to worry. But the fact that he was still at Chengchow told her that he was still confined to bed and unable to leave for Hsuchow.

A few days later, Tuan Wen appeared in the afternoon with the exciting news that she was going north. The first party of volunteers had telegraphed that they were bringing back about forty orphans, and that there were many more in the villages and towns in the Taierchuang-Hsuchow district. A second party was to be sent at once, and Mss Tuan, as one of the first applicants, had been selected with five others, to start in two days.

‘‘Can I come with you?” asked Tanni. “I want to see the war ficont, and I want to gather a few orphans myself.”

"We can give you a few orphans when we bring them back.”

"No, I want to selert them myself. I am hoping to find a ghl around ten, like Pinpin.”

"Well, perhaps you can come along on the same traio. When we ate in the field, you can join us. Miss Tien, our leader, has

seen you and knows of your work here. I will speak to her.”

So it was decided.

The party was to start on die third day. Mulan disapproved when Tanni told her.

"You ought not to go,” she said. "Poya will soon be here.”

But Tanni was stubborn.

“I must go,” she said. Her tone tos decisive. “The first party took only ten days for the whole trip. I shall be back before he comes. Besides, Mr. Peng is up north, and I want to persuade him to come back with me before Poya comes. Somebody must take charge of the house, and they have plans to discuss together. Do you know, they have not met since Uncle Peng and I left Peiping half a year ago? And 1 hope to bring home a few orphans or my own,” she added.

"Poya will be surprised to find you a war worker, I am sure,”

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said Mukn with a resigned smile. “But come back soon. There is a wedding waiting for you.”

That morning Tanni left, clad as she had preferred in a mauve serge blouse and overalls. The refugee house was left in r>iarj^ of Wang Taniang and Yumei, and Mulan promised to help if she was needed. Huan-erh, in white mourning, came with Amei to see Tanni ofiT. Chiuhu also had come, and Tanni gaily said good-bye to them all.

CHAPTER XX

Tanni beached Chengchow late the following afternoon, and, after putting up at a hotel with her party, went immediately to ftnd Lao Peng at his hotel.

“Who shall I say is calling?” inquired the fet clerk, looking at her curiously.

“I am his niece.”

“He told us be had not a single relative to look after him.”

“He didn’t want to ftightcn us — that was why he didn’t let his relatives know. Is he very ill?”

“He came ftom the north ten days ago, and he has been in bed most of the time. I will send you up.”

A boy led Tanni up the stairs and down a dark corridor. At the end room, the boy stopped and knocked. There was no answer to his knock, and the boy opened the door. The room was dark although it was only five o’clock.' Tanni tiptoed in. The blinds were down, and only a few circles of light struck the wall. She saw Lao Peng’s big head and shaggy grey hair upon the small pillow. His eyes were closed. Noiselessly she approached bedside and stood looking at him. He was soundly asleep. ,

Tanni’s heart twitched. Lightly and noiselessly she approached his bedside and stood looking at this man who in her eyes was without fear and without reproach, who had done so much for her and now had come to live in solitude on her account.

She looked about the room. It was a very small rectangular room, with a single bed and a small table on which stood an old

teapot with a broken lid and two small cups on a tray stained wiA spilled tea. There was one wooden chair cluttered with Lao Peng’s old blue cotton gown that she knew so well and the handbag that she had seen him carry so many times in the streets, and a small pile of dean laundry. TTie familiar suitcase that had gone with them on the journey from Peiping was standing near

3ie modem enamd washstand. The bed was in the middle of the room and there was bardy space to pass the end of it to reach the wmdow. The cirdes of sharp light on the wall cast his face into a beautiful profile, moving regularly and perceptibly widi his breathing. She had never seen him ill in bed; now in his peaceful sleep she saw the nobility of his bony free and the great heart in his heaving breast.

, She was sure that since Poya's coming he was a changed, sad man. What if Poya had not cx»me? This man would have been her husband. She was sure that he loved her. He was breathing peacefully in his sleep; what did he think of when he was awake? She bent over and saw the s hinin g lines on his big forehead, moist with a light perspiration. She wanted to touch his forehead, to feel his temperature, but dared not. What could she do for him? Her throat was tight, and she took a handkerchief, and softly blew her nose.

The slight noise disturbed him. Presently, his eyes opened.

"Uncle Peng, it is Tanni. I have come." Sudd^y her throat choked and her voice frltered in the middle of her last sentence.

Lao Peng's eyes stared at her in happy surprise.

"Tanni, when did you come?" His voice was low and broad and pleasantly frmiliar to her ears.

“Just now. Why didn’t you let me know? What is this illness?” • _ ^

He made an effort to sit up. “It is nothing. Why did you come?”

Tanni smiled through her tears. “Oh, Unde Peng, it is good to see you again.”

Lao Peng saw the tears in her eyes and was struck dumb for a second.

“Tanni, I am all right. Tell me why did you cx>me?”

“Because I knew you were ilL”

**But didn’t you get my letter? I told you I was all right.”

“I did. But it was adiessed from this dty, and you told me

yon were going to Hsuchow. So I guessed that some thing had happened. I was so worried for you that I had to come. Have you had no one attending to you?”

“No, I did not need anyone. It is only a cold I car^ht in Sinsiang. I was able to get up last week and then was confined

to bed again. Somehow I have not the strength to get up.”

“What medicine are you taking?”

“I don’t need any medicine. I am fasting and taking kanho tea only. I shall be well in a day or two.”

“Oh, why did you have to come alone to this place?” There was a plaintive, diiding tone in her voice.

He coughed and told her to turn on the light. Then she saw lhat he was dressed in a white cotton jacket, and his fece was a little thinner, but otherwise quite his usual self. He even affected a little gaiety to minimize his illness and moved about a great deal. She was conscious that he was puzzled by her attire.

“Aren’t you glad to see me?” asked Tarmi, coming back to her seat in the chair.

“Tanni, you look the same to me — even in that dress,” said Lao Peng. His fece was smiling.

“Why did you have to come here?” they said at the same time, he disapprovingly and she with a vexed face. The coincidence amused them, and for a moment they looked at each other with a look that was good and reassuring, telling them they were happy to be together again.

“Uncle Peng, I had to come. A great many things have happened since you left. Pinpin died when our house was hit by a flying rock during the bombing.”

He asked for the details and she told him, and went on “Many things are happening. Poya is coming in May. He has already left Kunming. You must come back. The place hasn’t' been &e same since you left.”

The glaring electric light suspended from the ceiling ovet the bed, was shirung direcdy into his eyes. She noticed that he raised one arm to shade thenn.

“Is the light hurting you?”

“It does not matter.”

Tanni took a handkerchief and tied it around the lamp-' shade.

“There, is it better? I can fix it better later.”

5z6

"Tell me, 'when is Poya coming? What did he say in the letter?”

"Oh, the usual things. There is nothing in it.”

"Did you tell him — mean

Tahni looked a'way. “No. The letter -was all about his ■work, the 6ooo-foot altitude of this mountain in Yunnan and yooo-foot altitude of that mountain in Kweichow. There was nothing to read in it. One whole page about the Burma Road — ^he is full of it. You know what I mean — no thin g warm and personal that a girl would like to read.”

Tanni sat there, telling him many thing s, about Qien San’s return and the death of his mother, about the celebration at Hankow, and about how she had come with Miss Tuan’s patty. She hadn’t known for sure when she started whether he would still be here or whether she •was to find him in Hsuchow.

"When are they starting for Hsuchow?”

^‘To-morrow. I thought we might take back a few orphans. But I am not going with them. I really came to see you.”

Somehow she blushed when she said this and her eyes met his. It was the same look they had given each other when he had promised to be father to her child. Abruptly she turned her look sideways, and was silent. Looking somewhat embarrassed, she looked at his pile of laundry and groped for something to say.

"Why do you put your clean laundry there?”

"I can rea^ it more easily. There is no other place to put it except the suitcase.”

Tanni got up and started to walk about the small room, but her steps were lassy and she setded in the chair again. Lao Peng asked her if she did not want to eat now, and asked her to order food for herself, but insisted that he was festing for his own good, ^en the boy came in, she asked him to bring a piece of green paper and some pins, to fix the lamp-shade. While waiting for the food, she went and opened the blinds of the window, for now it •was getting dark. Lao Peng saw her standing silently before the window, wrapped in thought, her silhouette cast against Ae twilight sky. He had a strange sense that somehow something unusual was happening, that his fete was tied up with hers, that she was going to remain close to him for ever.

When the food came, Tanni was unaware of it, or did not heed .it, standing perfeedy still at the window, her hands in her slacks

pockets, like one about to arrive at the solution of a mathematical problem. After another three minutes, Lao Peng said, “Your

food is getting cold.”

Then at last she turned. Her face was transfigured. Without trying to persuade him to eat a little with her, she took up bowl and chopsticks and ate silently, mechanically, now and then looking at him. A great struggle was evidently going on in her mind. When she had finished, she went to the washstand, and after washing, without a word she took a handkerchief ftom under his pillow and washed it for him, and pasted it on the wall.

This done, she took the green wrapping paper and pins that the servant had brought. She had to Imeel on me bed to pin the paper around the lamp-shade, looking all the time atrsiously so that no light should shine into his eyes.

“How is that?” she asked when she had finished.

Only then did he see her smile.

Then she took out her vanity case and began to powder her face, standing at the end of the bed against the light, where the paper had not shaded it off. From the shaded comer of the bed, Lao Peng watched her. Her brows were drawn down and her' face wore a solemn expression.

“Why did you come?” she heard him say. She could not see his face, but liis tone seemed reproachful, almost angry.

She directed a look in his direction, bit her lips, but kept silent

The servant had now brought in a warm pot of tea. Still silendy, she finished her make-up and went towards the tea-table standing near his bed. As she dlted the pot, the chipped lid fell into it. But she went on pouring two cups, and, handing one to him, she said:

“Don’t be angry with me.”

'T am not angry,” he said, and thanked her rather formally.

The air of the room was filled with a sudden tension.

Then she started to fish out the lid that had ftllen into the pot. The tea burned her finger, and she had to go round the bed and potir half the pot away. After manoeuvring with the pot for five minutes, she finally succeeded in taking the lid out with the aid of a haii^ln.

“Have you a piece of thread?” she said, almost ftightened by her own voice.

“It is in the suitcase.”

She ■went and got a length of coarse thread and came bade with the pot and seated herself on the chair again. While trying to tie the thread through the nose of the lid and festen it securely to the two brass hooks in that shaded green light, she at kst broke the silence.

“His aunt is already arranging for the wedding, to take place soon after he arri'^es. I understand she has gone so fat as to arrange for his divorce.”

Lao Peng said nothing for a moment; then he said, “I am so glad to hear it. I shall try to be at the wedding.”

Still bending her head and playing with the thread in her hand, she said in a low, solemn and affectionate whisper, “Tell me, why did you tun away from Hankow?”

Without turning his eyes from the green-paper shade, Lao Peng answered, “Because I wanted to see the war front.”

She had made her knot and now bit off the ends of the thread ■with a snap of her teeth. Turning her eyes straight towards him, she said:

“That is not true. I know it is not true.”

“What then?”

“It is no mote true than the reason I gave for coming to see you. Will you be quite honest with me, and tell me that after we heard Poya had come to the interior, you purposely kept away from the Hungshan in order to avoid seeing me.”

His eyes looked into her free, now so close to him, her eyes glowing ■with a deep passion.

"Please don’t, Tanni,” he said.

But she went on in a plaintive, almost tortured voice. “Let’s not pretend any more. You avoided me because you were sacri-ficing yourself, to let Poya marry me. You were torturing your-self. I saw you drunk that night by yourself all alone. . . . Since that night, I have not had a moment’s peace. TeU me. Unde Peng, you do love me.”

“Why do you want me to say that?”

“Because I know now that it is you I love. You promised to be my husband, and I promised to be your ■wife. Then we heud from Poya, and you went away and hid yourself. You are making a misrnke. You are torturing me now.”

Lao Peng ■was struck aghast. But she did not heed him.

was foolish. I thought I loved Poya.”

"Of course, you do. You are going to marry him.”

"We must make this straight. I cannot go on with the wedding unless we do.”

"Tanni,” said Lao Peng, his voice trembling, “I confess that I have been tortured with a passion for you. But what else would you expect me to do? You ate sorry for me because you have seen me suffer. Yes, I have tried very hard to forget you . . .Butin a month you will be Poya’s wife. Forget this foolishness of the moment. You don’t know yourself. You will regret what you are saying now.”

"Oh, Peng,” said Tanni. "I am not being foolish. I know it is you whom I love.”

“You should not. Poya is my friend. You are both young. He loves you and he completely understands you.”

"But I don’t completely understand him. I completely under-stand you. Oh, Peng, standing there looking out of the windov before supper, it all became clear to me. Poya loves me because of my body. I know what he expects of me. But I can no longer

play the kept woman to him. I can see myself married to him, and though I am married, I shall be no more than a mistress to him, serving his pleasures and bending to his will. No, I said to myself, it was Malin that he loved. I was and shall remain Malin to him. To you I am Tanni. ItisyouwhoaeatedTanni— my name and my soul. Qin't you see that I have changed? Don't you see it is you whom I can love?"

As she finished, she laid her head on the bed and wept.

'You are making it hard for me. You must not take advantage of me when I am iU in bed," said Lao Peng firmly, but touchi^ her hair spread on his quilt.

Raising her head, she said slowly, with a fece that seemed to him spiritual and remote: 'You do not know what I was doing when I stood before the window. You have told me of 'sudden* conversion and enlightenment. I will describe it to you. I •vra looking over the room of the houses in that twilight, but my mind travelled far beyqnd. I thought of Pinpin and Ae death of Chen San's mother. Suddenly everything melted before me, and became empty. The figures of Pinpin and Chen San's mother and Poya and myself and Kainan were no longer individvud persons. We all seemed merged in — in one cycle of birth md death. Isn't the 'sudden' conversion of the Ch'an Buddhists just

like this? Aad strange to say, my spirit was uplifted and filled with happiness — ^from within. From now on, I can bear anything that happens.”

Lao Peng was silent for a moment. Slowly their hands met, and Lao Peng’s grasped hers for a moment. Tanni bent and kissed his hand, wetting it with her tears.

“Oh, Peng, I love you. Save me. Don’t let me many Poya. Don’t be angry with me.”

His voice was dry and his brows knitted with a sense of the irony of his own dilemma. “Tanni, I am not angry. But you must realize that this is harder fof me th^ for you. Poya is my friend. I will not allow it. You must marry him. I forbid you to entcrtaiu this love for me.”

Tears stood in her eyes. ‘‘But I love you. Oh, Peng, I love every line of your foce. You said it is not a sin to go on loving.”

“But this is different. Don’t be foolish. You have loved Poya truly. I'saw it on your face when his telegram came from Heng-yang. And you have his child in your body now. It cannot hie done.” His voice was austere.

‘Tt can be done. Oh, I beg you, you were good enough to

promise to marry me, knowing that I have his child in my body. You can still do so now."

"But that was on the conditibn that he should change his mind. Now he is coming to marry you."

"He might have changed his mind," she exdaimed. "Why shouldn't I? He doubted me. You never did. I'll tell you why I decided to come to you. Your letter and his letter came on the same day. I found myself opening your letter first — it was a casual momentary choice — but when I realized I had done it, I knew that I loved you mote truly than I loved him. After reading the letters, his and yours, I knew why 1 had done so. His mind, his thoughts, lay a thousand miles away from me. There is a strange lack of warmth in his letters. They are all about his own activities. Of course he was speaking about out country, but I want some-thing personal. You were speaking not of yourself, but of me, of Yumei and Chiuhu and Pinpin and even Yueh-o. You said I had neglected Yueh-o — a soul like any other soul. You know I have obeyed you and befriended Yueh-o and found a happiness in it because you had told me to do it. How could Poya under-stand such things? And you spoke of our house on Hungshan,

which made it watm and lovable for me and gave me a feeling of

close familiarity and partnership. When Mulan told me she \7as taking steps already to arrange for the wedding, I beciroe j&ightened. That was why I had to come to see you."

'Tanni," he said, a little wearily. "Listen carefully to me. I know that you love Poya and you will know it, too, as soon as you see him. You will know your true mind then. What is troubling you is your fear that you will revert to what you once were — that you will become !^lin again. But you an Tanni now and you can remain Tanni. If I have done anything for you it is to teach you how to do that. You trained your mind to forget your love for Poya once. You can train it to forget this— this love for me, when you have married him. You are strong enough now — strong enough not only to remain your tme sdi^ but strong enough even to lead Poya and take him with you," Tanni did not hear him. She fell to weeping again, burying her head in the bed.

^Tt is too late," said Lao Peng, adamant.

^t is not. You cannot drive me away from you. When we go back, I will teU him frankly that I love you, that it is none of yout fault. I will take all the blame if you will permit me to love you."
'Tt — can't be — done," said Lao Peng firmly.

Now Tanni saw that she could not change his mind and fell to weeping again.

^TDon’t weep, Tanni,” he said, but his voice shook and his hand pressed lightly her bent head.

She raised her head and saw that his fece was wet. Raising hei plaintive eyes to him, she said, 'T know we love each other. Don’t let us deny ourselves this love.”

She rose from her kneeling position on the ground and sat on the bed. Her face came closer to him. Before he knew it, she leaned over and placed a kiss on his face,

^TDon’t be angry with me,” she said as she drew away.

Tanni and Lao Peng had come to no solution of their problem. While Tanni had forced the declaration of love and brought it above the surfece, Lao Peng rigidly excluded any compromise of principle.

While obeying him outwardly, she wanted to wait until she saw

Poya, when she believed she could convince him. She had dropped the word "uncle” and called him “Peng.” But the open declaration of their secret feelings for each other had made it

easier, and they continued to behave towards each other like old, devoted friends.

Tanni had stayed behind and had told Miss Tuan that she would join her party at Hsuchow after a few days when Mr. Peng should be well enough to take the journey. Three days later, the two took the train and arrived at Hsuchow on April 25 th. All available hotel rooms were occupied by officers and officials on duty. Miss Tuan's party was staying at the Hsuchow Normal School for Women, and through special arrangements, Mr. Peng was given a room, since the school had been vacated by students, while Tanni stayed with Madame Chiang's War-Area Service Corps.

Wiile the brick school building was not big, it had a pleasant garden, planted with fruit trees and flowers now in bloom. Some of the gkls had gone out to the devastated countryside around Taierchuang and had returned with fifteen or sizteen children from the destroyed villages, bringing with them amazing stories of what they had seen and heard on the way.

But the best stories were told by the Kwangsi Girl Soldiers themselves, some of whom were staying at the Normal School. These five hundred girl soldiers who had passed through Hankow last month, had taken part in the Taierchuang batde. In their regular grey soldiers' urmorm, it was hard for the enemy to detect them as women. But when hand-to-hand fighting began, they were recognized as girls by their screams. Unequal in muscular

prowess in close combat with men, half of the girl soldiers , were cut down by a brigade of Japanese cavalry. After that, the girls' battalion was broken up and not allowed to go into battle, but the remaining members stayed at the war front and, while retaining their uniform, took up other forms of war work, carrying the wounded and doing war propaganda among the country people.

Anxious to hear of Poya's arrival in Hankow, Tann i had tele-graphed a message to Mulan, giving her their Hsuchow address. Two days later, Tanni was surprised to receive a telegram from Foya himself. He had obeyed Mulan and had flown to Hankow from Chungking.

JJ 5

‘'You see how he has hurried back to come to your wedding.- Lao Peng told Tanni.

The very next day a telegram airrived addressed to Lao Pern and Tanni, asking them to wait for him at Hsuchow, sinr<. ijg ^ starting in a day or two to come and see them. Boli understood that, as a strategist, Poya could not fail to come to visit the battlefield, especially when they were there.

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When Poya arrived at Hankow, he went immediately to see Mulan and stayed at her home. He learned much about what Tanni had been doing at the refugee home, and he laughed loudly when Atung and Amei told how Tanni and the others had dressed on the night of the celebration of the Taierchuang victory. A divorce and a setdement were being arranged wi3i Kainan by Afei, he was informed. Privately, Mulan told him that Tanni was expecting a child.

He flushed and looked away for a moment. “I thought perhaps this was so,” he said, “when you were so quick to plan this wedding. But did she tell you herself?”

“No, she said not a word. It was the country girl staying wi4 her who told me.”

“Yumei,” said Poya. “I must go to see her and ask ha myself.”

So the next morning, he set out for Hungshan. Mulan and Chen San, and Huan-erh went with him, for Mulan was looking after the refugee house in Tanni’s absence.

Poya took Ae flrst opportunity to see Yumei alone. Yumei pa

him on the defensive, but after a good deal of pretence aid good-natured coaxing on Poya’s part, she finally said;

“Yao shaqyeb, I will tell you, but you must not tell siaocikh that I have said it. ‘Once begun, better have it done.’ I never m such a confiding siaochieh — and you a married person, too. And I also never saw a siaocbieb so anxiously waiting for your lettet Hoe, somebody already let you come near her, and then you forgot all about her for three months.” Then lowering her voice ^ looking down at her feet, she added, ‘‘She has happiness k htf body. Imagine how worried she was.” She told him of tha fiunting incident, and continued in her normal tone, “And she still didn’t hear ftom you. In what kkd of a position were yos

putting out siaocineb? How would yout heutt feel if you were a girl in her place?”

^fHonestly I didn’t know. She didn’t tell me,” remarked Poya in self-defence.

“How could a siaocMeb tell about such a thing?” Looking at Poya out of the comer of her eye, Yumei added, ‘It is lucky that you came finally, and smcbieb was greatly relieved. Otherwise your own child was going to bear some other surname.”

Now Poya was sincerely pu22led. “Somebody else’s name?” he esclaimed.

“Of course. Would you expect siaoebieb to give birth to a baby without a father?”

“Then who?”

“Can’t you guess? Siaoebieb went to his room to study Budd-hist Scriptures every night. And one night she told me that her problem was solved. Have you ever heard of such a good-hearted man as Uncle Peng?”

“Do you mean that he proposed to marry her?”

“Does it surprise you? He always does good deeds. But other men worJd not have been willing to do it.”

“And she accepted him?”

“Would you emect otherwise? But siaoebieb, after all,’ was t h in king of you aU the time. After your letter came, I asked siaoebieb what about Uncle Peng, and she said that of course he was going to marry her only if you had forgotten her. I never heard of such a simple-hearted p«son as Unde Peng.”

Poya was so stupefied by what Yumei had revved that he

hardly heard her as she went on. "Now you count the months.

You are a man of honour. When siaoebieb comes back, isn’t it

time ^? The rice is already in the caiddron; it cannot be

uncooked.”

“Yes, yes, of course,” answered Poya dully. "Why did Unde

Peng go up north?”

“■^o knows? He went to stay in a hotel in Hankow and went

north later. Then siaoebieb heard that he was ill and she went to

join him. But I wouldn’t have you think there was anything

improper between them. Siaoebieb was thinking only of you and

that was more than I would do if I were in her place.”

At this final stab he smiled and said wryly, “I dways knew you

wouldn’t want to marry me, if you were siaoebieb”

55J

“I would never have the luck to marry a gentleman, but if I

had, I certainly wouldn’t pick a married one.” She hesitated a

moment and then looking straight at him said, “But I must teD

you — siaochieb said I must tell you — ^that it was not she, but I who

called you a ‘swine’ over the telephone.”

Poya chuckled. Thanking her, he rejoined the conq)aay will a load of thought on his mind.

* *

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Poya was determined to go up to Hsuchow to see Tatini and Lao Peng. In his impatient state of mind, he could not wait He wanted to sec how Tanni looked in war-area service; he wanted to clear up the exact relationship between her and Lao Peng; he wanted even mote to study the battlefields and the topography around Taierdiuang.

Curiously, at patting, he said to Mulan: “Go on with the divorce. But deky the preparations for the wedding — at least until I come back.”

He arrived at Hsuchow on May jtd, towards sundown. When his telegram came, announcing that he was coming, Lao Peng had said to Tanni gravely: “You must be fair to him. I would thii ill of you if you weren’t. You must suppress your feelings forme.”

Tanni sat and listened, strangdy unmoved. Suddenly she flared. ‘T cannot,” she said resolutely. “Don’t you see that I am not at all excited over his coming? I just don’t feel it. It is all your feult. I did not love you when you made the first sacrifice—

I was grateful and deeply touched. But I loved you when yon made the second sacrifice, when you hid yourself from me, when you left Hankow, when I saw you lying sick and alone in the Chengdhow hotel, all on my account.”

“But, Tanni , remember what I said about selfless love. Think of Po;^ and not of me. I can be happy even though you p, married. He cannot be happy without you. You ate being selfish.”

"Yes, I am being selfish. Because you made me see a diflSaent kind of Ibve. Because I can no longer be satisfied with the kind of love he could give me. Because you have changed me. Yoii noade me feel proud — and good on the inside. He never did. It was so from the very begianing. I know him now. He will marry me and decorate me to parade before his friends, and give me a.

lot of money to spend. I know that, I never saw a man mote engrossed with hunself. Malin might have been satisfied with that, not Tanni, not your Tanni. OPeng ...”

“You must stop calling me Peng before him. Call me Unde.”

‘T won’t stop.”

Lao Peng’s face lengthened. “Tanni, don’t make it too hard for me. I have decided I cannot marry you. You must tty to be affectionate to him, and be natural . .

Tanni felt vanquished. Wearily she said: “AU right. I shall marry him, but I shall go on loving you.”

It had been raining aU day in Hsuchow when Poya arrived. The two went to the station to receive him.

“Oh, Poyal” said Tanni with a bright smile like an old friend.

On die platform, Poya put his arms around her and kissed her, and Tanni permitted him, but did not return it. This did not surprise him, because she could not be expected to do so in public. He was in riding breeches and mackintosh. It seemed to her that he had not changed at all, except for his well-trimmed moustache and his tanned face. But she noticed that he had a new revolver in a holster at his belt. He shook hands heartily with Lao Peng and then, taming, he surveyed Tanni closely. She was in her overalls, and she had tied a red scarf around her neck. He glanced quickly at her waist. It was no longer small. He remembered Yumei’s words: “The rice is already in the cauldron; it cannot be uncooked.”

The station was on the north of the city, separated firom it by a stretch of vacant ground and mud houses. A d r iz zl i n g rain was

falling , and, though it was only six o’clock, the s^ was already dark. The three came out of the glaring electric light of the station, and engaged rickshaws.

‘'Where is the Tsefiingshan?” asked Poya.

“I don’t know, do you, Peng?” replied Tanni.

Poya noted the tone of familiarity between the two.

Lao Peng replied that he did not know and had not even heard ofit.

“Are you going to Tsefangshan?” asked one of the rickshaw pullers bidding for their fare, apparently delighted to earn some money for a longer trip than a few dty blocks.

“No. lam just askmg,” said Poya.

“Why are you asking about the Tsefangshan?” asked T anni .

"Don’t you know? The hill is just outside Hsudaow. It is named after Qiang Liang, or Chang Tsefeng, the great scholat-strategist of the Ts’in-Han da3rs.”

They en^ged three rickshaws. The Tsefengshan was, in &ct, very near, visible in daylight, but now shrouded in the

Pointing to their left, the puller said: “It is over there. Just a few It from the other station, of the Tientsin-Pukow R^way. On the east of the city. I will take you there to-morrow, if you want to visit it.”

"Haven’t you heard of it, Tanni?” Poya shouted across to Tanni, who was riding in the rickshaw in front.

Tanni turned her red-scarfed head and said: “No.”

"But Hsuchow is the place of many great historic North of here, Peihsien, is the birthplace of the First Bm p^rpt of Han Dynasty.”

Now Tanni had read about the battles of Hsiang Yu and Liu Pang, who later became the Emperor of Han, w;hen the two were fighting over the remains of the great Ts’in Etnpire. It was one of the most famous chapters of i'Aiifo', and had been a popular selection for school reading, and she knew as W9II as he did that the First Han Emperor came from Peihsien. But she kept quiet, occupied in more iiiunediate thoughts.

At the Women’s Normal School Poya was put up in the same room with Lao Peng, where an extra bed had been made avaikble.

They had a simple meal together. Tanni saw that Poya was unquestionably as fond of her as ever. He was even enthusiastic over her war attire, and his ways were warm and endearing as they had been in Shanghai. Tanni watched him with a dazed expression. She was not quite as hearty, and Poya could see a depth and a hint of sadness in her eyes tdiat he had not seen before. Strangely she did not stay long and soon excused herself.

Lao Peng and Poya sat talking in bed, with the lights out and the rain drizzling on the leaves outside.

“I have been told by my Second Aunt that she is expecting a baby. I could see it to-night.”

“Yes. She was thinking of you all the time, and this inacased her worry. Why didn’t you write then?’’

‘Tfou know how the mails miscarried,” said Poya lamely.

"I never saw a more devoted sweetheart.”

"Thank you for taking, so good care of her.” Poya stopped.

“Oh, she is wonderful, just wonderful ”

“I think you should hurry. She told me that, your aunt is already arranging for the wedding. Soon it will be difficult to conceal the condition of the bride.”

“Yes, of course.”

They went on to talk of other different things, and Lao Peng soon heard Poya snoring peacefully.

The next day, the spring showers abated a little, but the sky did not dear. Since it was impossible to go out, Tanni camp, over for a talk. She was still in her war-service uniform, with a deeper rouge added to her lips. Her hair was well boxmd, clasped behind as she knew he liked it, and she was even prettier to^y than he had seen her the previous night.

“My Second Aunt raved about you,” said Poya, surveying her proudly. “She said that she would dress as you do if she were a young girl now.”

“Tell me what you saw on the journey,” she asked, smiling sweetly at him. “You must have seen the whole south-west.”

'Tt was only a preliminary surveying trip,” he said. “But I have covered two thousand miles in the last two months and a half.”

He began with desultory remarks about the beauties of the

Nanyo and the lakes of Kunming, but soon, as he went on, he became doquent, almost inspired. He had gone south-west as fer as Tali, but he was full of the “watershed of Yunnan rolling majestically into the plains of Szechuen” and of the Mountain of Furies and Four-Cobras Great Snow Mountain, sandwiched between the Rivet of Furies and the Lantsang Rivet that stretched &r into Sikang.

“Where is Sikang?” asked Tanni artlessly. In her school days, Sikang had not yet been given a provincial status, and nobody had ever heard it mentioned, and it wis still practically an unknown province lying east of Thibet. Recalling the ignorance of geo-graphy of Ids women relatives at Shanghai, Poya was amused, and asked:

“Do you mind if 1 quiz you on geogtaphyl”

Tanni looked at him and said: *'Of course not.”

“Where is Kweiyang?”

Now as a matter of fact Tanni knew the south-west rather well now, because she had been looking at the maps while tryii^ to follow his itinerary. She had missed Sikang omy, because it is £ir

to the west of his route of travel. But she was a little spitefni to-day at the idea of his quizzing her. She had not kno'VTO^ Paofen, Dimfragrance, Lola, and Kainan had been subjected to the same test. So she said droUy:

“What ifl don’t know?”

“Well, don’t you?”

“It is &e capital of Kweichow.”

“Oh, you are better than Kainan,” he exclaimed.

Tanni was annoyed.

“^Tfou know, I asked this question of all my and of Lola and Kainan, and only Paofen kneu is.”

Tanni felt a little better.

'Tiet me ask you another question. Where is Kweichow province itself?”

This was a tricky question, which might have floored a gteat majority of school and college graduates.

“Why should I answer such questions?” asked Tanni, looking sharply at him. *

“I am 'quizzing the bride’ — it is the old custom,” he laughed.

“You are wrong,” she said. “The old custom was for the btide to quiz the bridegroom, never the other way round. What if I foil?”

“I am only joking. You can answer it or not — as you like.”

“Should I answer his question, Peng?” said Tanni, t urning to Lao Peng.

“Why not, if you can?”

“WeU, Kweichow is south-east of Szechuen, and north of Kwangsi.”

“Slighdy incorrect,” corrected Poya. "It is of course dkecdy north of Kwangsi. But it is also south of Szechuen. Most people think it lies south-east of Szechuen.”

“Why, I thought so myself,” interposed Lao Peng.

“In a sense, you two are right. You see, the entice northern border of Kweidaow runs feirly straight east and west and adjoins the Szechuen province. That is why I say it must be

considered directly south of Szechuen. It happens, howevei;
that Szechuen is a very big province and its western comer dip
south deep into the Yunnan province, so that you ate justified in
saying that the Kweidiow province is as a whole south-east ol

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aunts m

’ where Kweiyang

Szechuen as a whoie. But thek western ends just don’t meet, being
separated . .

“Have I &iled as a bride now?” Tanni’s tone was mildly
sarcastic.

Poya laughed. “No, no,” he said. ‘Tfou know the great trick
in reading maps is to watch for jigsaw comers and panhandles.
For instance, where are we now?”

“Hsuchow, of course.” Tanni’s voice quickened, and her eyes
glittered with a sense of insult.

“Yes, but the question is, in what province are we?”

“In Honan, of course.”

The question was even trickier. The district of Hsuchow and Taierchuang lies where the four provinces of Shantung, Honan, Anhwei, and Kiangsu meet, and Hsuchow happens to be in the long, easily overlooked panhandle of Kiangsu, where Shanghai is.

“No, in Kiangsu, I am sorry.” His voice was patronizing and triumphant.

‘Now, have I failed as a bride?”

“■What’s the matter, Tanni? We’ll drop it if you don’t like it.” He saw that she was a little nervous.

“Tanni, 1 have a suggestion,” said Lao Peng with a low smile. “When you marry hitn, you should cut out a cras^-quilt, made of orange and blue and green, representing the provinces on the map of Hiina and study it carefully every mommg before you make the bed.”

‘Now may I quiz the bridegroom?” asked Tanni. Poya heard her somewhat hard tone, and thought she was angry with him because of the examination. So good-humouredly, he encouraged her to put him to the test.

“Of course. But on geography only.”

“All right, let me see,” said Tanni very slowly. She had seen only 'that day a newspaper story about Hitler’s march into Austria, and there had been a map of central Europe.

“Where is Czechoslovakia?” she asked.

Now Poya’s knowle^e of geography was confined to C hina , but he had a hazy idea.

“In the east of Germany of course, north of Austria.”

‘Not entirely correct. Its western half is north, south, and east of Germany, being imbedded in it, as it were. On the vbok^ of course, you have the right to say it is on the east.”

She chuckled ttiumphandy, but her tone was definitely hostile.

“How do you know it so accurately?” he said, laughing, ate marvellous. You can flunk me on that. Now give me anothet chance.”

"All tight. But it must be something outside of geography-

something mote human.”

"Go ahead.”

"How old is Unde Peng?” she asked.

Poya was puzzled, bewildered, even a little firightened.

"Oh, forty-seven or forty-eight.”

^‘You ate wrong. I’m afraid I must flunk you after all. Heb

forty-five.” Her tone had a dedded note of triumph.

Poya reddened and laughed at himself. “You know sometima

we forget the age of our best and dosest ftiends.’’’

The conversation left a bad impression in Poya’s mind, even

more than in Tanni’s. What did she mean by making the pok

that Lao Peng was forty-five? Her whole attitude, particularly tht

triumphant tone with which she had said it, might even suggest!

warning that he open his eyes a little. ... A man of forcy-fiw

was not incapable of love. . . .

* *

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It is curious that we have taken the Buddhist word foi "causality" (pra^^a), otjifgiua», and by adding a feminine radical to the Chinese character fotjin, have made it serve for "romance." Actually the two words are pronounced s^ke. The implication is that marriages are made in heaven, or rather that they ate detet-mined by fec^ors silently and strictly obeying the laws of causality of events, however minute and invisible the causes and howeva fortuitous the events may appear to be.

The andent author of the Aeory of causality knew that human events are governed by laws as delicate as an apothecary's scale, "Heaven's justice does not miss by a drachm," as the saying goes. Tanni's tone oi^iqued and exultant hostility was a kind of outlet for the ^st sufferings she had endured from Poya, and she vm unconsdously taking revenge on him now. If he realized a Utde late that Tanni seemed doser to Lao Peng than to him, it was only because he was taking the natural consequences of being interested in his own work and plans first and neglecting to come to Hankow immediately after Tanni left Shanghai, or at least sooner.

he did. If he had not doubted Tanni, at least he would ha-ve written her during the first months of their separation. Now he was tortured by another doubt, this time a more personal one.

The rain had stopped that evening. Poya went out with them to a restaurant, but his manner toward Tanni seemed changed. He was more loving and considerate. At table, he kept patting her as if he felt the necessity of courting her once more. He was treating her both as a bride and a lover. When ordering food, he first asked what she liked. All this perhaps because that morning she ha d, without her conscious effort, word, or deed, suggested that she was his equal, and this was different from the always sweet and obliging way in which she had spoken to him at Now that he knew the whole story of her anziety over the and her waiting for him, he felt also sincerely sorry and was perhaps trying to make up for it. Lao Peng’s conversation with had left bim in no doubt that she had been loyal to him, and that he was soon to marry her.

So at table the three were very happy together. Pop asked Tanni about her different girl friends and their work for refugees. Poya and Lao Peng drank facing each other again, as they had done so often at Peiping, but now they were dri nk in g in the as they had agreed to do, and this time Tanni was wilh

them.

Lao Peng proposed a toast to their approaching wedding and happily with Poya, while Tanni merely touched her lips to the rim of the cup.

“Oh, yes, I forgot,” said Poya. “I have something to show

you/’

Slowly he took from his pocket a leather pocket-book. As he

was trying it out, something fell from it, wNch Ta^ recognized

as the envelope of her own letter to him, a'little soiled and flayed

at the comers.

“That’s my letterl” exclaimed Tanni.

‘Tes, I carry it always with me. Here’s something I want to

show you.” . , j .1,

As he opened the pocket-book, he took out a piece of ted silk,

catefuUy folded, which was his copy of the pledge of love. Tan^

blushed. Slowly unfolding it, he said to Tanni lovingly: “Look.

I had it witnessed by a lawyer.”

Her eyes glistwi ed. “When did you have that doner

“When I was in Shanghai.”

‘T thought you had forgotten all about me in Shanghai.”

'“How could I, Lien-eth? I have carried this with me whetevet I went during the journey.”

Tanni felt apologetic about having burned her own copy. She looked at him steadily, but remained very quiet.

”Come, sing me something, will you?” Turning to Lao Peng, he asked: 'Tfave you ever heard her sing a big-drum story?” ^

Lao Peng said no, and Tanni said that she did not feel lihe singing. " ‘The higher the class of music, the fewer there are to join in the reficam,’ ” she remarked, quoting ftom an old stoiy about music lovers. Although touched by the sight of the silk, she still kept her defensive attitude. Her remark imphVd a s]y reference to Poya’s inability to understand her and the war work which she was sharing with Lao Peng. But Poya was importunate.

“This is the first time we have aU been together, after such long separation. Won’t you?” His voice was tender.

Casting a kindly look on Poya, Tanni yielded and sang a short piece, her voice shaking. After that, the three went back to theit rooms.

The next morning was clear and beautiful. Poya wanted to go to see Taierchuang. Neither of the other two had been although Miss Tuan’s party had gone and had collected thirty orphans and brought them to the school. The trip to and ftom Taierchuang took a whole day, and they could bring only seven or eight orphans in their two srn^ cars. They were going out again to the north of Taierchuang to-day, e3j>ecting to gather children, and then return to Hankow.

The trip ftom Hsuchow to Taierchuang took about three hours, They passed fields of green wheat bending in billows in the spring breeze, bright and pleasant after the rain. By ten o’clock they reached the town with its massive mud walls. Many soldiers were sitting on the bank of the canal, some smoking their pipes, and talking, some washing their clothes, others taking water oat of the canal in tin cans to boil over open fires.

The town was actually a part of the war front. Fighting had . been going on without interruption since the Japanese retreats' month before. The enemy had retreated to the more hilly distrid of Yihsien, twenty miles to the north, which they were able to hold with reinforcements. To recover their “fece” so badly lost

at the majoi defeat, they had sent strong columns down the

Tientsin-Pukow Railway and by the Tai-Wei Highway ftom Shantung. But the Chinese also had poured more troops into the region. The battle line had swung back and forth, and villages and hills had changed hands many times. Two days ago there had been a severe artillery battle near Nikou, five or six cnSes north of Taierdiuang. There had been a severe battle the previous night, lasting into the morning, on Lienfengshan, ten miles away to the east. Actually the Chinese and Japanese Lines still dovetailed into one another in the most complex fashion.

The party got out of their cars at the canal bank, as the fioatiog bridge was not strong enough to be crossed. A few steps from the bridge they saw the west gate. The gate still bote an old stone panel with the inscription “Old Site of Taicheng.” A branch railway ran to the west of the city, and the two upper floors of the three-storeyed South Station bad been demolished.

In the town not a house was intact. Debris had almost obliterated tiie streets. Only one or two toads had been cleared, leading to the Great North Gate. Everywhere lay broken furniture, tags, burnt wooden cases, empty shells, and charred walls and doors. Remnants of barricades, built of mud bricks and wooden boards, still blocked the roads every few yards.

The party went to the Confucian Temple Tachengtien, or what remained of it. The officers recognized the War-Area Service Corps by their uniform.

*T>o you want some mote orphans to-day?” asked an officer, with a smile.

The leader. Miss Tien, nodded.

“You might go north toward Nikou. Many homes have been destroyed there in these last two days.”

But Poya wanted to see more of the immediate scene, and it was agreed that they would go north only to liuchiahu, about two mUes away. Poya knew that south-east from the city was Pihsien, closely connected with Chang Liang, or Chang Tsefeig, the &mous scholar and strategist, after whom the Tsefengst^ in Hsuchow was named, and who was also the first guerrilla in China’s history. This hero’s life had always fesdnated hm. Oiang Liang’s ancestors had for five generations been Premiers of the little Han of the Seven Warring Kingdoms, and when it was destroyed by the powerful dictator state of Ts’in, Chang sold

all his family property and plotted the mm of the dictator, in which he eventually succeeded as the chief of staff of the later First Emperor of Han. The fact that Chang Liang retired ia his old age and became a Taoist made him still closer to Poya because that was what his own grand&ther had done. He recalled

the strange historical fact that Taoists had always marie the best strategists and administrators, because of their calm and their vision and breadth of mind.

Going out of the Great North Gate, they saw a long level stretch of green wheat fields, and soon passed four wrecked Japanese tanks. At Liuchiahu they found that what everybody had come to see were the great graves of Japanese soldiers, where five to seven hundred were buried in one mound, as the wooden sticks planted above them indicated.

At Liuchiahu, Poya, Tanni, and Lao Peng turned back and separated from the group of girls. It was agreed that they would find their own means of transportation, since the two small cars would have to be filled up with orphans.

Back in tne city, they ate their lunch, which they had brought with them. Poya took every chance to talk with soldiers and officers. Every soldier who had taken part in the battle a month ago was glad to talk. Their fiices were always creased into smilw when they told of the retreat of the enemy. Only their ragged cotton uniforms and leather belts distinguished them from the common farmers, for that indeed was what they were; and thqr wore their straw sandals as if they were still working on the lantl.

Poya said that he wanted to go east.

“You had better not go too fer,” said an officer. “There is

fighting in the hills.”

Listening, they could hear guns in the distance.

“How fer away is the fighting?”

“It is between Saehu and Lien&ngshan, about ten miles fiiom here.”

“We won’t go that fat.”

“Keep close along the Grand Canal, and you should be safe," said the officer.

They started walking in the direction of Pihsien, along a broad road. It was a beautiful spring afternoon and they went oa ■leisurely, especially because Tanni was -with them. The occasional booming of guns in the lulls lent an air of esritement. This had

been the scene of the fiercest fighting. Shell holes dotted die fields and empty shell cases lay all along the road. Small detachments of grey-umformed troops passed them, going out to'ward Pihsien, and motor-cycles were passing in both directions. A lone Japanese scouting plane was flying very high above them. Poya

was excited because this was the first time he had been to the war front.

He took his pistol firom his belt and pointed it at the plane, saying with a laugh; “I wish I could bring down that little dragonfly up there.”

Mtex about an hour they saw a stone paiku standing a little off the highway, commanding the entrance to a battered village. Shell holes, fallen walls, and broken trees bore witness to the fighting of a few weeks ago.

They saw one tree whidh on one side was charred by gunfire, and on the other side was already putting out new green leaves. “It is a symbol of Qaina,” said Lao Peng.

They had Inow walked four or five ndles and Tanni was quite exhausted. Poya suggested striking off the highway to take a look at the stone monument.

“Will you be too tired to go as &r as Pihsien?” asked Pqya of Tanni. “Or shall we stop in ihis village and then turn back?”

“How fer away is Pihsien?”

“About another hour’s walk. I’m aficaid it will be too much for you.”

If they went on to Pihsien, it would be too late for them to get back to Hsuchow that night, and they agreed to go into this village and rest.

There was a large shell hole in the path leading to the 'v^ge, now containing rain water. Tanni started to go around it, but Poya said: “Don’t. Let me carry you.” He seemed particularly affectionate. She resisted a little, mote o\it of embarrassment than genuine disapproval, and as he carried her over, she kicked her legs ineffectually.

The villagers had ahready returned to their homes after the fighting a month ago.

WhUe they sat in one of the houses and talked with a middle-aged woman about her esperiences during the great battl^ a detachment of troops on motoB-cydes and bicycles came rolling into the village.

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"You had better all dear out of here if you don’t •want to get

shot,” an officer shouted. “A Japanese cavalry unit is coming down from the hills. We are going to intercept them here.”

In an instant, the peaceful -village was transformed. women, and children hurried to pack up their dothing and bedding and small valuables into parcds that they could carry •with them.

"Go quickly,” said the village woman to Tanni, and ran out of the house. The tea-ketde was still singing over a fire of red-hot charcoal.

As they went out to the highway, they saw three more enemy planes drding in the sky. Iiifantry was filing across the wheat-fields from several directions.

Poya went up and spoke to the officer. He had seen the patty arrive this morning at the Confucian Temple and knew that they had come with the War-Area Service Corps, and he was polite, but a little impatient.

“Where should we go?” Poya asked.

“Follow the bank of the canal,” said the officer crisply.

Lao Peng said to Poya: “Borrow a bicyde and take Tanni. She cannot possibly walk all the way.”

“What will you do?”

“I can walk,” said Lao Peng, calmly.

The officer was busy giving orders to his men. He had no time for dvUians. But Lao Peng went over and whispered to him that the girl -was expecting a child. The lieutenant looked at her and shook his head in annoyance.

“All tight, take one of those bicycles. But why did you ever, come to this place? This is the battle front.”

He pointed to a bicyde and Lao Peng went over and brought if to Poya. He took off his go'wn slowly and folded it and fixed it behind the seat to make a cushion for Tanni.

“We can’t leave you,” said Poya. “We had better all go on

- foot.”

“Get on and don’t argue,” said Lao Peng, with a pladd smile, “I will follow.”

The sound of shots was coming nearer. The villagers -were hurrying away in both directions.

Tanni stood with teats in her eyes. '“Let’s all three go together and hide in the fidds. If Lao Peng doesn’t go, I won’t go,” she said

‘TDon’t axguel” he said, almost angrily.

Tanni’s &ce was frantic, as Poya and Lao Peng lifted her to the seat which Lao Peng had made for her. She was crying piteously and jumped down again.

“Are you crazy?” Lao Peng spoke to her angrily. “If you care for me, obey me. Get on and hold tight to him. FU come through and join you.”

Wi3i a desperate, tormented expression on her free, Tanni looked at Lao Peng passionately through her tears.

“Be careful,” she sobbed. Her voice quivered.

“Q>me along the canal and join us,” said Poya as he climbed on to the bicycle, while Lao Peng held it steady.

“Go carefully, and don’t f^” said Lao Peng as cheerfully as if nothing had happened. He stood aside and watched them go. “Good-bye,” he called. “I will come through and join you. HI don’t catch up with you in Hsuchow, look for me at your wedding.”

Tanni was crying so frantically that her hands shook as they rinng around Poya’s waist. The bicycle gathered speed. They heard, from the village behind diem, the barking of machine-guns, and then shouts, and the galloping of many hooves. Tanni screamed.

At a turn of the road her grasp slipped and she almost fell off.

Poya stopped, breathing heavily, and looked round at her with troubled eyes. She gazed at him guiltily.

"He will be all right,” Poya said. He looked at her helplessly, with a sudden understanding. “Now you must hold fest”

As he started again, he heard her stifled sobs.

In that moment he knew that she loved Lao Peng.

They had left the village about a mile bdiind them, and the sound of the gunfire still seemed very near. Groups of soldiers could be seen hidden in the fields at widely separated spots. They followed the bank for about another mile. The sound of fighting now grew more distant.

There was a shell hole by the roadside where rain water had collected. Poya stopped and led Tanni into a field, leaving the bicycle on the roadside. She was still crying wildly, beside herself with grief. Neither of them spoke.

They crouched in the wheat; it was only two or three feet high,

but a slope away fitom the path gave them perfect concealment.

Tanoi sat on the ground, sobbing helplessly, while Poya looked a

her in silence.

'*!£ he should die ” she said at last, wiping her eyes

mournfully.

*'You must not worry. He will be safe.”

Suddenly they heard the clatter of hooves again. Poya peered

out between the wheat stalks. A group of ten or twelve Japanese

cavalrymen were coming along the bai^.

He snatched out his pistol and stood up. The horsemen wetea

hundred and fifty yards away. He stooped to kiss Tanni, then

went across the field with measured stalking steps.

“What are you doing, Poya?” she cried, raising her head.

He did not turn round, but went and stood squarely on the

path.

“Poya! Come back!” she cried.

He turned now and made a gesture for her to keep dose to the ground, and smiled. Tanni renaained on her knees, transfiseA The cavalry rode toward them, raising a doud of dust. She mi Poya advance, his body erect, gun in hand. When tihe cavalry had come within twenty-five yards, he began to fire. The first horse man fell. Water firom tihe sh^ hole splashed into die air. EBi horse reared and dashed on. Shots were fixed -back. Slowly, methodically, Poya took aim and fired another shot and sd another. His body swirled and fidl.

. Tanni was struck dumb with terror; The cavalrymen dashec past where he had stood without a stop. As soon as they wen gone, she dragged herself to the patib.

Poya lay on the road, his &ce to the ground, the gun still in M hand. With a great efibrt she turned him over. Blood stained M vest. His legs crossed as she turned him over. Gently she tried t: put his right leg down. Poya shrieked with pain. A hoof hic crushed his thigh.

"Oh, Poyal” she cried.

His eyes opened and looked distantly at the blue sky abow him.

She bent over him, calling his name between her sobs.

"Tanni, don’t cry,” he said in a gasping whisper. “Marry I* Peng.” He stopped and began a^ain with great effort. “All money is yours. Bring up out child.” Pointing to his pocket, b said with a kst smile: “It is there. Our pledge!”

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His eyes dosed and his head fell to one side. His hfpathing stopped.

Tanoi sat staring at the ground, unable to comprdhend what had happened.

She must have sat so for half an hour, during which and space had lost all meaning. Then she was aroused by a fatniliaf voice calling; ‘‘Tannil \lmat has happened?”

She turned round and saw Lao Peng running toward her, in jacket and trousers. He saw Poya’s body and knelt down beside it. Tanni looked at him without a word.

“He is dead.”

She nodded.

Lao Peng turned and pointed to the bodies of three Japanese lying in the road, one of them half immersed in the water of the shell hole.

“And these?”

'Tie killed them,” said Tanni briefly. “I cannot tell you now what my eyes have seen.”

Now Lao Peng’s heart was struck with a deep sorrow and his tears fell and his Ups shook &om his effort to restrain them.

The action was over. The Japanese cavalry, which had been sent out to test Chinese positions, had been intercepted and dispersed. Those who were stUl aUve had fled, and the Chinese snipers began to stand up in the wheat fields and reassemble. While Tanni waited, sitting on the ground, her legs too weak to stand, Lao Peng went ofl and persuaded a group of soldiers to come and see the three &llen Japanese and reUeve them of their ammunition and uniforms. They asked how these three Japanese had been killed, as no sniper had been posted in this field

Tanni pointed to Poya’s body, and said; “He killed them. He fought them standing up, one man with a pistol against twelve horsemen.”

When they learned how Poya had died, the soldiers ofered to carry his body. The easiest way to return to Hsuchow, they said, would be to find a boat to Chaotun about fifteen miles south and then board the train on the Lunghai Railway.

The soldiers went off down the canal and returned after half an hour with a small fishing boat. They carded the body to the

boat, with Tanni beside it, weeping aloud, and Lao Peng sil^ t as death.

The fisherman was greatly ftightened by the uncxavered corpse, but still more frightened was a young girl of ten who was in the boat, which had been hired by a refugee femily from Pihsien. The mother, a sick old woman, was fleeing with the girl and het two sons, one grown-up and one eighteen, a delicate boy of the merchant class.

“You must not take money from these people,” a corporal said to the boatman. “This man has killed three Japanese and has died for his country.”

Lao Peng thanked the soldiers and asked them to take the

bicycle back to the officer. Tanni collapsed in a heap as the boat moved away down the canal.

After a long time she sat up and, taking off her red scarf, toM Lao Peng to cover Poya’s fece, and then she spoke to the sick mother.

“Where are you going. Old Aunt?”

“How can we know? Bombs clashed through our house. I told my sons I didn’t want to come, but they insisted on carrying me away because they say we can no longer live in Pihsien, so close to the battlefield.”

The girl cowering close to her mother, her back turned to the corpse, looked stea^ly at Tanni.

“I am fifty-six and I have reached high age already,” the old mother went on. ‘“It is only on account of Tientien-erh that I consented to come. She is so smalL”

The girl now pointed to a door panel with ropes tied round it which was standing in the side of the boat.

“That is our ficont door,” she said. "We put bedding on it and my brothers carried my mother.”

“You see what an old life like mine isl” said the mother. "I

caimot walk and my sons have to carry me. How can thq journey carrying their old mother? Is not my old body a burden to them?”

The boat was being slowly rowed along by the fisherman and his wife. Lao Peng cmcukted that it would take them until after midnight to covet the fifteen miles. But the fisherman -m. reluctant to carry a corpse and he refused to row after sundom Lao Peng said he would pay, in spite of what the soldiers had saH

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“Oh, no, I "will take no money. He died for our country.”

But the fisherman’s wife intervened and said that they would row all night to reach Chaotun, being glad both to get extra pay and to get rid of the body as soon as possible.

Tanni lay down on a plank but she could not sleep. Lao Peng sat neat her and she told him the story of Poya’s heroic death. But in the presence of the strangers she could not tell him Poya’s motive, nor his parting message. Only then did she remember that Poya had pointed to his pockets and said that they were to take the contents. Lao Peng went and searched them and he showed her what he had found, a map, an old letter of Tanni’s, and a pocket-book. It contained some money and his copy of

their written pledge of eternal love.

After a while Tanni began to talk again ■vnth the old mother and the young girl, who was slender and fragile and had big eyes like Pinpin’s. When she told them that she had come with the War-Area Service Corps to take orphans from the battle areas, and talked of Madame Chiang, the girl racclaimed:

“You have seen Madame Chiangl”

The mother became excited too; and said: ‘Tientien-erh, I am old and sick. I cannot look after you for long, and you will only be a burden to your brothers. 'W^y should I not present you to Madame Chiang, through this good sister?”

Tientien-erh’s big eyes turned toward Tanni. It was the way Pinpin had looked at her.

“Oh, will you give her to me?” she cried. “Will you come with me, Tientien-erh?”

The little girl drew back to her mother’s breast.

“Tientien-erh, you’ll see Madame Chiang if you go with the good sister. You cannot make your old mother happier. Go to her.”

“Come to me,” said Tanni, stretching her arms toward the child. Slowly and shyly Tientien-erh, pushed by her mother, came forward, and Tanni took her .on her lap.

Night fell and the boatman announced they had still eight or nine miles to go. They could not possibly row all night. He finally agreed to tow until midnight and to start again early to cover the little distance left before daybreaL

There was not enough room for them all to lie down, for Poya’s body occupied half of the bow, but somehow they curled into the dflfV narrow space and the little girl and her brothers feU asleep.

Then, at last, Tanni whispered to Lao Peng what Poya’s dying message had been. The story seemed almost incredible to him in that strange darkness, with Poya’s body lying covered so neat to them and yet so fer away.

At last Tanni cried herself to sleep, her sobs mingled with the rhythmic beat of the fisherman’s oars creaking and striking the water and the lapping of the water against the boat as it slipped along through the moonlit night. Lao Peng dozed off only when the lapping of the water ceased and he knew that they had mooted along the bank.

All was quiet.

Some time later he was suddenly waked by a splashing of water, as if someone had fallen in. Frightened, he groped for Tanni and found her arm. She did not waken.

In that dim moonlight, in which the willow trees on the bank were reflected in the water, he looked about. He saw the child sleeping on her side, but where the mother had been lying there was only crumpled lidding. He reached over to it. The mother was gone.

He waked the brothers.

“Your mother is gone. I heard the sound of someone falling into the water, but it was too late.”

The sons crawled to the bow, and crouching aaoss the body of Poya, scanned the water anxiously. But they saw only a gentle tipple travelling ferther and ferther away, catching glints ftom the m^ressibly beautifiul silver moonlight.

The boatman and Tanni were wakened by the weeping and sobbing of the brothers. Only Tientien-erh still slept peacefully in her dream.

The boatman lighted an oil lantern which cast a dim glow on

the sad company.

Plans had now to be changed. The two brothers refused to go further. They said that they must go ashore. The canal wm sluggish here, and they would surely be able to recover thcii mother’s body, so that she could be buried properly. On other hand, Lao Peng and Tanni were anxious to go on with Poya’s body as &st as possible.

In the early dawn, Tientien-erh was wakened and told what had happened. She cried pitifully as her brothers and Tanni tried to comfort her and persuade her to go on with Tanni.

The pa tting was so pitiful that even the boatman and his wife shed tears. The morning wind was chill, and Tanni covered Tientien-erh with her arms and told the brothers to feel easy in their hearts.

Turning to Lao Peng, she said, "Give the brothers some money, so that they can join us at Hankow after they have buried their mother.”

“Of course,”' said Lao Peng.

To the utter bewilderment of the boatman’s wife, Lao Peng took the two hundred dollars which he had found in Poya’s pocket-book and gave them to Tientien-erh’s brothers with his Hankow address.

Only then did the girl feel somewhat comforted, and the paffing was made easier for them all. And m that dim dawn before the sun had come up, the boatman took up his oats and they said good-bye to the brothers standing on me bank.

At the breakfast hour they reached Chaotup. They paid the boatman thirty dollars, but the wife was dissatisfied, having seen that Lao Peng had plenty of money. She kept demanding more on account of foe corpse until foe boatman angrily silenofo her.

Now T.ar> Peng went and bought a coffin and had it brought, and Poya’s body was hastily laid in it. Tanni sat on foe canal l»nk fl n d wept, Imnrkt’ng her head against foe coffin as many women do. In her grief she pounded her arm against foe coffin and foe jade bracelet broke. She ga 2 ed at foe broken bracelet and then laid it with her red scarf close to Poya’s hand. Then she had blue woollen yam brought and tied it into a knot and put it in her hair as a sign of mourning. - '

They intended to take foe coffin first to Hsuchow, which was about two hours away by train. But foe coffin was not properly varnished and sealed with putty, and foe station-master, a short,

safe, and unimaginative man of forty, refused to take it. They bad either to stay at a small tavern in this primitive town while the coffin was varnished and made tight, which would take twenty-four hours, or they must hire a truck for which they had not enough money left.

They spent a fong titne in argument with foe station-mastet,

•who could do no wrong and break no rules, telling hitn that the dead man had killed tbree Japanese single-handed and that he had died fighting only the tky before, and the train journey \fas only for two hours. At last the station-master consented to tele-phone to the Railway Administration at Hsuchow and the permission was granted, and at four o’clock they boarded the train with the coffin and Tientien-erh.

Arrived at Hsuchow, they learned that Tuan Wen’s party had been greatly worried when the three had not returned the prcTioui night. Unable to wait for them, the party had gone on, tfllring more than forty orphans, and only Miss Tuan remained behind.

They sent a telegram to Mulan, telling her briefly what had happened. While at Hsuchow, Tanni opened Poya’s suitcase and found among other things a diary of his journey, do'wn to the

time he had left Hankow. It was in some respects a revelation to her; unlike his letters, it contained many of his secret thoughts and references to herseltf, in most endearing terms. One of the latest entries, under April 28th, made evidently after his talk with Yumei, was as follows:

Visited the Hungshan to-day. Oh, what a fool I have beenl Lien-erh must be quite a changed person. She has gone beyond me. I must yet tty to understand her better — ^this Buddhism and her interest in war work. I feel almost unworthy of her. But what makes me angry -with myself is what Yumei said. Her words made my cheeks burn. Forgive me, Lien-erh. I shall try to be worthy of you from now on. I was blind and I might have lost her if I had not come into the interior. I am sure she still loves me now. But if not ... I shall never marry another woman, not can I love another. I hope I am not too late.

Tanni was stung speechless. The motive for his death clearer than before. She decided not to show the diary to Lap Peng, but with tears in her eyes hid it in her own suitcase.

They returned to Hankow with Miss Tuan and Tientien-erb and the coffin. Both Lao Peng and Tanni sat through the joum^, saying very few words to each other, dazed and occupied wi^ their own thoughts.

Mulan came with her mourning femily to meet them. Uppa seeing Mulan, Tanni wept profusely again. Knowing at oi 4

that Tanni was exhausted, Mulan asked her to stay in her home for the time being. When Tanni reached the house, she broke down completely. The next day, she ran a fever and fa lifted in delirium.

Frightmed and distressed, Mulan sent for Lao Peng, who was temporarily staying in Hankow to see about the funeral. Lao Peng came, his fece white as death. After he had gone in to see Tanni, who was still delirious, Mulan took him to another room, where they could talk alone. After a moment of tense she asked him for some details. He told her some of the circum-stances of Poya’s death, and about the pledge of love, which was now in Tanni's keeping.

"What can we do that will be the best thing for her?” said Mnlan

Lao Peng answered with a deep sigh, “The principal filing is that she is ejecting a cMd.”

“If it is a boy, he will be the only male great-grandson of the Yao femily. My brother Afei has only daughters. We can legaliTe the marriage, but it is hard to ask such a young girl to remain a widow. It must be her own choice. But even if she

prefers to be free, I will provide well for the child.”

Lao Peng remained thinking for a long time. Then he said,
“The best thing woxild be for the child to bear the Yao name, if she would consent. Otherwise, there will be no male descend^t to carry on the Yao name. We can go through a simple ceremony, making her married before Poya’s spirit-tablet, in the presence of the closest relatives. But of course, we cannot make the choice of widowhood for her. We must wait till she gets better. Gently suggest it to her and see how she responds.”

“If she consents, it will have to be done quickly. We must delay the funeral ceremonies, even the funeral notice, for we have to mention the widow with other relatives in the notice.”

The next day, Tanni’s mind was clearer, although she was still confined to bed, and very feeble. Mulan went to her and said:

“Tanni, I have to speak to you. Poya is dead, and we must think of you and the child. If you wish, we can make the marriage entirely legal. If it is a boy, he. will be the only male grandson of the Yao femily. . The Yao family will be honoured to have you as a member, and I shall be |M:oud to be related to you. If it is so, then we have to mention your name in the funeral notice. But if you would rather be ficee, we should be glad to provide well

for Poya’s child. Think about it and let me know. Give yourself time. When you have decided, choose the proper colour of mourning for the knot on your hair, and I shall know.”

Tanni lay in bed, daaed and silent. The ^te of the famil y den was open for her, and Mulan was stantog there to welcome her. After a long while, she said, “Let me speak with Mr. Peng.”

When Lao Peng came into the room, the others retired.

Slowly Tanni stretched out her hand and grasped Lao Peng’s hand and they remained silent for a minute. Her past, present and future were focused in that single moment. She felt in th^ moment she needed all the strength that both of them possessed to make a decision that was to decide so much — ^her conflict of an old passion for Poya and a chastened love for the man before her the conflict of her obligation towards the dead, her future plai^^ with the living, and her duty towards the yet unborn.

Lao Peng was the first to speak. “Tanni, Fate is hard on you, You know my only interest is to help you, to do the best thing for you. We have completely misjudged Po3ra. His love was the true, unselfish love. He died in sacrifice . . .”

At this Tanni broke into tears. After a moment he continued “Tanni, it is hard for you to think now. You still have my offei

of marriage. But we should think only of his child now. He ha
not been unworthy of you. If you prefer to be his widow, the
marriage can be made valid before the funeral notice goes out
The e^)erience has been too much for you and for me. But if yot
have truly understood Buddhism, you should be strong enougl
to bear anything from now on."

"But what about you?" Tanni asked feebly.

"I shall carry on. Try to remember the vision you had at tb
Chengchow hotel. Courage, Tannil You will soon have you
baby and he will fidl up your life. Lose yourself in work for otihw
and you will find that greater happiness which is above thi
sorrows of our individum lives."

*'Cah I still join you in your work?"

‘'Why not? After this, both you and I must try to find a highe
happiness."

The nest morning Mulan saw that the blue knot in Tanni'
hair had, been changed to white and she knew Tanni had tnad

her choice. Preparations were made and the wedding was to take pkce on the third day.

In order to solemnize the occasion, Lao Peng asked Mr. Tung to officiate. Mx. Tung was visiting Hankow at the moment, and Lao Peng had known him as a director of the Buddhist Red Qoss. Owing to the emergency, the “invocation of the spirit” had to take place before the burial. The propitious hour chosen was six in the evening. Two white lanterns with blue characters bearing the name of Yao were suspended in the haU, and white candles were lit on the altax before the niche of the spirit-tablet. Over the niche was an enlarged portrait of Poya, hung over with , white silk festoons.

At the direction of the master of ceremonies, Mr. Tung stood faring the south-east before he said a prayer and put a vermilion dot on the head of the spirit-tablet. This done, the master of ceremonies intoned a second instruction for the tablet to -be placed in the niche. Then the master of ceremonies called the bride to come out. Tanni appeared from the eastern room, assisted by Yumei and clad in the white cjf full mourning, her eyes dim, her face pale and sad, like a dreaming peat tree in snowy bloom, and was led, in slow, measured steps, to the firont of the altar. In accordance with an ancient custom, suggested by Mulan, she was made to bow twice to the spirit-tablet of Po^, and one of the orphan boys in Mulan’s charge acted as the representative of the spirit (sbib) and bowed twice in return on bahalf of the deceased bridegroom. The simple ceremony was over.

Before putting his seal on the wedding certificate, Mr. Tung addressed the bride with a solemn smile, “I have solved quite a few mysteries. • Only you successftilly eluded me. I thought you were in Peiping all the time. Now I find you here. My congratulations.”

Yumei, who had insisted on being present at the wedding, "Wis asked to be one of the witnesses, besides Lao Peng, Mulan, and Sunya. When she drew a ckcle over her name on the wedding, certificate, big tears fell ficom her eyes.

Tanni wept bitterly.

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When June arrived, Tanni went up to the Hungs^ and took up her old work with the refugees, clad in white, in m o u rnin g

for her husbands A settlement of fifty thousand dollars had been made for Kainan, and Tanni had now all the money she needed to carry on her work.

As the months drew by, Tanni gradually recovered her spirits.

When the time for the coming of the baby was near, she went down ftom the hill and stayed at Mulan’s home. On September ist, when the enemy was advancing on Hankow, a boy was bom to her.

Meanwhile, Tientien-erh had proudly taken Pinpin’s place in Tanni’s heart, and her brothers had found their way to Hungshan and joined them. A calm had settled over the refugee house at Hungshan. Lao Peng and Tanni found in their common devotion a happiness which they had not thought possible.

Not far away on the hill was Poya’s grave. Above it stood an epitaph chosen by Tanni and approved by Lao Peng. It was a non-Buddhist, but curiously universal text:

Greater love hath no man than tbisy that a man lay down bis life for bis friends.

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, THE END.'*' •